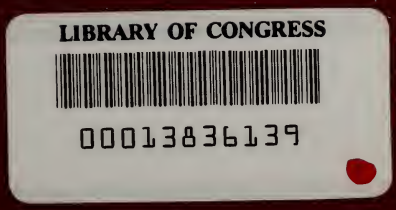
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00013836139

Class BT 1371

Book .P35

# MORNING CLOUDS.

[Mrs. Anne Judith (Barrow) Penny]

" This battle fares like to the morning's war,
When dying clouds contend with growing light."

SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, & ROBERTS.

1857.

BJ1571
.P35

By Trans
Dept. of State
DEC 1 0 1935

LONDON:
Printed by SPOTTISWOODE & Co.
New-street-Square.

TO THE FEW

FOR WHOM THIS BOOK IS INTENDED,

It is Dedicated,

WITH AFFECTION AND RESPECT.

# PREFACE.

THE sorrowful need a compassionate comforter, and those who are dark in their own counsel an understanding guide, an interpreter of confused notions. If any who open this book are disquieted by perplexities too vague to be accurately described, and beyond the reach of general advice, I entreat their attention while I endeavour to meet them. It is my earnest desire to be of use to such readers. The suggestions offered will have no pretension to originality; they must be, in great measure, echoes from the teaching of wiser men; but having myself passed through the uncertainties of youth with a troubled mind, I trust that experience may give to my words some force and facility of application, or, failing in this, may at least afford the quieting pleasure of sympathy.

You desire to be understood; for, though self-consciousness begins to be intense, you find the inner and outer life still unharmonised: you think if some one could know your inexplicable difficulties, if the strangeness of your particular grief was recognised, there might be more peace within.

You have much to suffer before you entirely believe that He who made and knows all that is in man can *alone* truly enter into the sorrow and heal the sickness of our souls. That He may make me in any degree a good messenger to you, who, with the battle before you, have not yet chosen the subordinate parts of your armour, is my prayer. The weapons, whose efficacy I shall insist upon, are those which our Creator has provided for us, and which only our own misuse can make altogether unsuccessful.

Lest any, for whom this book can have no other interest than that of an exercise for their powers of criticism, should take it up, and be offended by the indecorum of an ever recurring "I think," "I believe," "I advise," I must so far anticipate their censure as to acknowledge that I cannot hope

to escape it. Their approval I must forego. If, in consideration of my object, they grant me forgiveness, it will be a boon on which I do not reckon.

Those for whom I write will not mistake plain speaking for presumption, and to them I hope I need not apologise for using simple expressions in preference to the usual guarded forms of circumlocution, which, though less exposed to ridicule, are more liable to misconstruction, and about as modest as the reviewer's official "we."

Let honest hearts believe that when I say "I think," "I recommend," and the like, instead of "it would seem," "it might not be amiss," &c., &c., I assume nothing more than the privilege of directness in communicating thought, and I only claim the indulgent attention of those I long to serve.

People of small importance will sometimes tease their neighbours by frequently referring to acquaintances among the great, and friends will too often indulge their affection in the same way, and with the same effect. I am afraid that the number of quotations in this book might justify a reader in classing me among the most troublesome of these in-

discreet admirers: the best excuse I can offer is, that *for the most part* I have quoted the opinion of men really great,—friends of the whole civilised world,—counsellors so serviceable and unchanging, that I thought those who knew them already would be pleased to find them duly valued, and those to whom they were unknown, if once introduced to such companions, might be glad to make them their friends and counsellors also.

# MORNING CLOUDS.

## CHAPTER I.

"Era 'n gran tempo ; e del cammino incerto,
Misero peregrin molti anni andai,
Con dubbio piè sentier cangiando spesso.
. . . . . .
Tal chè 'n ira e 'n dispregio ebbi me stesso,
E tutti i miei pensier me spiacquer poí,
Ch' io non poter trovar scorta o consiglio."
*Rime del Casa.*

SOME degree of uncertainty is inevitable, when we first feel the power of self-direction. As long as the control of another gives definiteness to our proceedings, the peace of a freedom within limits leaves the heart open to every pleasant influence; and if at times the pressure of authority is burdensome, it is a hindrance felt to be external, and soon forgotten; at least in cases where a loving wisdom imposes, and

obedience receives it. A time comes when the supporting bands are withdrawn, when the inexperienced must direct themselves.

Left alone, with a sensitive, thoughtful nature, we feel the "burden of free will," man's glorious prerogative: to hold it worthily among the delusions of this life requires a long and severe discipline. I do not doubt that the good seed sown in childhood will spring up, though possibly under influences which seem overpoweringly adverse; and it is the doubt how to cherish the growth of good seed, how to keep the tares from choking, and the sun from deadly parching up, not how to find a better root than is planted already, which agitates us when self-education begins. In these days, the most honest mind, asking itself, "How shall I make the best use of life?" finds enough to confuse it. At every pause in the hurry of action, the thoughtful perceive that they are standing where many cross ways intersect, and that the signpost of each asserts that it leads to the same point,—to the *best* mode of living. Accordingly, we see numbers of eager travellers diverging in almost opposite directions, nearly every one assured that he treads the path leading to the greatest good; and, so far as this, all may be right; truth being infinitely greater than human powers of

perception, each finite mind may go (under Divine guidance) in the right direction for that portion of truth which his constitution will prepare him to receive, while that of his neighbour may need and obtain a very different view of it.

This consideration should guard us against intolerance and all the inflammable ingredients of prejudice; but it does not give any excuse for a slothful belief in the indifference of means. To the Creator alone can we say, all are of equal or no importance, for He is almighty; to the creature every atom of matter, each least shade of thought and feeling, may be of such importance as eternity only can measure.

To begin with what is a fixed anchor, before counting some of the waves which will buffet you, let us remember with thankfulness that in God's word we can always find His express will on all *main* points. But for instruction in those obscurer parts of our duty of which no distinct notice is revealed, we must look to the reason God has given, and to the experience we shall have of His providence on earth. Besides, to the good merchants, diligently trading with all their talents, abundant usury is given; to those who pray for it with faith, the influence of the Holy Spirit; so that while we are as careful in

the exercise of our faculties as if from *these* alone we could receive increase of wisdom, by our mysterious connection with the Divine Being we obtain supplies of grace for which language has no name and faith no limit.

Believing that you are fully instructed in sound religion, and have found in the Bible an all-sufficient answer to the tremendous doubts of the sceptic, I shall only try to speak in detail of those lesser ones by which you may be troubled, and which, I believe, are more fairly met by the humble suggestions of prudence than with *partial* and strained application of Scripture precepts, — often a most hazardous resource to feeble minds, and one always open to the attacks of cavillers.

In lines that need not be quoted again, Wordsworth has expressed gratitude for "blank misgivings" — at a time when, we may be sure, they were fully passed; for the soul of man is seldom more uncomfortable than when these overspread it. Have you not felt these misgivings? Have they not surprised you with an intensity of pain that seemed causeless? It may have been when you were flushed with a little unhoped-for success; or they may have followed a chain of petty disappointments, and turned conscious and definite chagrin into the vague-

ness of utter dejection. When your heart has been stung with the exceeding beauty of the external world, these misgivings have returned, and you have asked, with sighs, "Why am not I, why is not my daily life, in some way beautiful, with a perfection answerable to nature's?" And, again, some chance word has brought them back, and you have hastened to engross yourself with tangible things rather than endure the unavailing toil of self-questioning thought; or, as so often happens, peace of mind seen in another has reflected with sad distinctness your own broken and entangled feelings. I believe these sorrows belong to an order of beings whose capacities *cannot* long be occupied by merely transitory interests. Were you able to anticipate future wisdom, you might willingly resign yourself to these disturbances of mind as a pledge of far greater happiness, even in this world, than those incapable of them ever attain. But it is neither desirable nor possible that any should thus avoid a portion of life's teaching. Born for an immortality of inconceivable bliss, it is no marvel that the trifles of the present (and trifles we must esteem them till we better understand their purpose) seem utterly inadequate to still the spirit's thirst. It longs for something more than it finds, something greater than all that is offered to it; and

as day by day creeps forward with a heavy freight of little duties, little joys, little pursuits, the poor novice often groans with a despair seldom known when custom has tamed and time "rocked to patience." But when there is nothing in the outer life to which blind hope can attach its immeasurable web, the woman who cannot appease her heart with frivolous objects will too often admit delusions of such intense interest that for a time it craves nothing more. She will in many cases suppose herself to be loved supremely by the only person who can at all represent her ideal; and with this delicious supposition she will occupy her mind till the wholesome instincts of common sense as to what *is* are confused by wild dreams of what *may be.*

Whether, in the early part of woman's life, this folly affects all without exception, I cannot presume to decide; there is much to make one believe it very common — a malady seldom entirely escaped. And since a delusion, which at any stage of existence is almost invariable, must have its use, this seeming waste of feeling cannot be altogether in vain. The powers of an infant are stimulated by the sight of unattainable objects; those of the adult are, no doubt, exercised by the imagination of things equally inaccessible; and in devotion to one, who for the time

being represents human perfection, self may be a little lost sight of, and the only Disposer of hearts more constantly remembered. Yet, before any of you who read these pages enter upon this educational chase of shadows; or even if now you feel the delirium of *unwarranted* hope, let a few words of warning and comfort be favourably received.

Do not, if you love your own peace, seek to exchange it for the excitements of passion. If at your present age — perhaps something less than twenty years, you expect your feelings to be shared by the one for whose love you now think all other blessings would be easily given up, you expect what is not often probable; if you expect that such love when mutual should be approved by those on whose sanction its prosperity must depend, you expect what common experience proves to be very unlikely, and the unusual cases that are now and then heard of, fortifying the hope of each trembling heart that its own may be one of them, are the result of a combination of circumstances so rare, as to justify one in saying it is only *possible* for first love to be both happy in its object, and successful in its fate.

If to any one of you this uncommon happiness is assigned, the remarks I hazard (more in affectionate protest, than in the belief that they will do

good) are not applicable; neither will you who are so singularly blessed suffer from the aimlessness of life which I am attributing to my imaginary reader.

A destiny that makes this impossible is indeed blessed; and yet this suffering is truly a token of peculiar mercy; for it indicates a nature of great capacities, a nature which must be continually restless till it has found its rest in God.

With regard to the enchanting dream that for a while fills you with strong emotions, I must ask you to believe, that though now you can hardly conceive any other form of mercy than the fulfilment of your passionate hopes, the time may come when you will pour out heartfelt thanksgivings for the Divine Love which destroys the hope of man.

Many weary days must creep by first, and often must your heart sicken, believing its hope deferred, but indestructible; and while you cherish it, the present will be either a state of secret rapture, soon changing to an insatiable hunger of the heart; or a heavy load of blank hours that have no gladness, but flashes of sweet remembrance and sweeter anticipation. The process by which the deluded heart assures itself that its love is necessarily returned, is in all much alike.

First, the preference; the pleasant fancy; — then its nameless superstitions; the belief that you are preferred; the grave assertion, to yourself alone, that you were made for each other; mysterious coincidences; realised presentiments; clear proofs of similarity of taste, arranged with all the ingenious arts of self-deception; — till at last, by a strange mode of reasoning, even the silence of another may be so interpreted as to strengthen a false persuasion; and without exactly putting it into words like Molière's *Belise*,—

> "Ils m'ont su revérer si fort, que jusqu'à ce jour
> Ils ne m'ont jamais dit un mot de leur amour;
> Mais, pour m'offrir leur cœur et vouer leur service,
> Les muets truchements ont tous fait leur office,"

you are indulging in a somewhat similar train of thought.

Meanwhile the real life, external to this pageantry of hope, is tasteless and burdensome.

Too well most of those who have reached the middle age of womanhood know each crisis in this long fever; but if every one had given you her confession of its well-remembered course, its lingering weakness, and sorrowful close; you would still exult in what you persuade yourself is a more trustworthy

hope, till it perished, till the presence you had longed for brought its death-warrant.

Do not fall under the terrible blow; there is yet something to live for; there is yet love on earth, even pure and strong love, and always a refuge for the broken-hearted—everywhere the everlasting love of a reconciled God. He hears you moan; you are neither unpitied nor forsaken. The words of a fellow-creature are at such times utterly unavailing, but to the Comforter you can show all your grief.

It is after the first days of bitterness are over-passed—when, disenchanted and feeble, you find traces of the silent wreck on all sides of your daily life: it is then that I would try and gain a hearing for truth among the harsh discords of disappointment; desiring to press upon your incredulous mind this unpoetical fact—that the love which can never be yours was most unlikely to have made you permanently happy. Granting that your affection was won by real excellence, it by no means follows that it was of the kind which you would continue to love when brought into close connexion with it.

The experience of every day is convincing many unfortunates of mistakes in this direction, that a whole lifetime cannot undo. Perhaps you do not yet know that love attributes so much of an ideal nature

to its object, as to leave the true nature often unguessed. Very often we imagine in another person all those good qualities which lie undeveloped in ourselves. In how many instances of woman's love, it may be said with some truth, "the form *she* so much worshipped was *her* own." Not consciously, for it happens when self is in complete disgrace with the imagination; and assuredly it is the last form we wish to find a duplicate of when it is better known.

Time, ripening those latent virtues which were given to the hero of fancy, will bring to many a far more exalting object of love than the idol of their youth, — one whose very difference of character will be the closest bond of affection; and (though you will now be offended if I imply any likeness in your fate to Titania's) you may some day look back to this miserable present with wonder, scarcely able to recognise your grief, and owning that it was indeed "the fierce vexation of a dream." I know the weakness of words on this subject; but whether mine have brought smiles to those readers who disclaim all cognizance of this youthful distemper, or tears to those who even now listen and watch for an arrival they hardly dare expect, I entreat them to distrust every vehement hope that calculates on

human affection; and in all their future perplexities continually and without reserve to commend their destinies to Him "who disposes of all things sweetly and according to the nature and capacity of things."*

Beyond the beautiful mirage of Love, the shadow of Death is frequently imagined, and welcomed as a hope. The shock of a great sorrow seldom fails to tell upon health, and it is often followed by symptoms that threaten serious disease; while the patient, believing that her languishing condition is only a preliminary of fatal decline, feels soothed by the prospect, and would reluctantly resign its secret and melancholy joy. People are apt to say, "How sad for such a young person to be taken!" when death happens early. I believe this is seldom the feeling of the young, unless they have already gone far enough under the real shadow of death to be able to appreciate its gloom and terror, with fancies as vivid as the inexperienced bring to bear upon the more definite sorrows of life. Keen affliction causes in young hearts such astonishment, such fresh pangs of grief, they cannot believe them common to humanity, and so they will often persuade themselves that it is for the especial purpose of *quickly* weaning them from life, that the time of

* Jeremy Taylor.

trouble is allowed; "indeed," so the foolish heart expresses itself, "unless death is shortly to bring the crown, this degree of suffering is unaccountable." Thus, with a happy ignorance of their future, and a curious counterfeit of resignation (flinching from the lot to which they *are* appointed), they enter upon a solemn preparation for death,—that may be distant by tens of years,—and neglect all that would fit them for the peculiar duties of earthly life in its usual length. A sense of leave-taking gives an indescribable pathos and charm to the ordinary details of existence; it sublimes the most minute occurrence to meet it as one of the few more of its kind which we are to witness. What can be uninteresting, when we believe ourselves on the threshold of eternity? what have power to disturb the heroic calm in which the deluded soul is wrapped? When time bears us on, and instead of the haven we find a wider sea; when the expected harbingers of death come not, and bodily health is manifestly improving, then is the time for heroism; for so feeble is our hold on undoubted truths, that when we see no probability of death, an unlimited term of years seems to warrant the carelessness of the happy, or the dismay of one that is "vexed with all things." From the apparent endlessness of immediate prospects, the

unhappy turn with something like despair. "Blank, wintry, dark, unmeasured," the horizon of a colourless present circles the waste of time. They cannot believe in a brighter future — the present paralyses even the powers of hope.

You who have not nown this state of feeling, and not for once or twice, but for days together, in many succeeding years, will think my expressions too strong. Alas! too many will understand all poor Leopardi felt when he said,

> "Intanto, io chieggo
> Quanto a viver mi resti, e qui per terra
> Mi getta, e grido, e fremo. O giorni orrendi
> In così verde etate!"
>
> *La Sera.*

When seeking comfort for these, I think it would be a mistake to urge them vehemently to consider the disagreement of such feelings with baptismal vows, and the whole Christian profession: hearts which are faint and wounded must be led back to the combat with great gentleness. For the perturbations of spirit which some are allowed to suffer, there is *no* speedy remedy, and it will only increase the tendency to desperation, if we allow ourselves to speak of it as a strange unholy error that can be easily dismissed.

But to return to this common anticipation of early death; though I find a sort of amusement in recalling my emotions, when it occupied me (since I certainly played a part in a solemn drama of my own, instead of living with cheerful attention to actual things), yet I would in no way speak lightly of a persuasion that may be sent for warning, and justified by the result. When at *every* age death is frequent, all who believe revelation must continually prepare for the final summons, and watch always. But, I suppose, it is a duty, with rare exceptions, to *wish* for a continuance of life, and, in all ways which do not run counter to our eternal aim, to live as if we expected it. It was noted by Dr. Cheyne, as his resolution, "to neglect nothing to secure my eternal peace, more than if I had been certified I should die within the day; nor to mind anything that my secular obligations and duties demanded of me, less than if I had been insured to live fifty years more."

Let us not think it any sign that we love God, if we allow ourselves, when troubles come, to long for death. Job earnestly desired it, but the glorious hope of a Christian is to be made like Jesus; — surely this likeness is faintly sought for by those who fear to follow Him in the gloom and tediousness of pro-

longed trial. Remember always, in your most miserable moments, that a merciful Shepherd leads you on,—that His injunction to the trembling disciples of old is still addressed to each of us, "Fear not." And do not doubt that He will give you fitting work, though now temporary discouragement may hide from you its importance. No seeming insignificance, no weakness of mind or body need hinder any creature from advancing the glory of God, and the good of man. Let us shake off the drowsiness of sorrow; let us find out our work, and by God's help do it perfectly. Some will answer to this with almost a groan: they will say, "It is the very misery of our lives that we cannot discover in what *our* work consists; and so our days drift away, unused among the rubbish of other wasted lives."

But supposing your days have no conscious purpose (and a mournful supposition it is), yet they are not necessarily wasted; even these blank days are teaching, if nothing else, *pity;* if you are wise, many other lessons, equally precious. Do you not by them gain sympathy, and the power of helping other disconsolate seekers? Have you not learned, once for all, that circumstances cannot make peace for the objectless mind? All this, and much besides, of which you could give no account now, but of

which you will feel the worth in years of fuller occupation. It may now appear a treasure dearly bought, but our education in this stage of existence is of such tremendous moment, that true wisdom accounts the cost to be trifling.

## CHAP. II.

"Arbeit giebt Kraft-gefühl, und in diesem besteht unser höchstes Vergnügen." * — *Müller.*

In the abstract, I suppose all will agree that work is one of the greatest blessings we have; that it is honourable to labour diligently, and that an inactive life is generally a most unhappy one; but though we know this, and entirely believe that the petty business of every day has its "outlet to infinity," it comes to us, under many circumstances, with a very different aspect. And it is often as difficult to decide what our especial work is, and how to do it, as to overcome the reluctance to obvious duties to which human nature is so perversely disposed. Far more difficult to the thoughtful than to any others, reflection suggests hindrances in a variety as inexhaustible as the scruples of a morbid conscience; and if the reflective mind is

* Work gives the feeling of strength, and in this our highest pleasure consists.

moreover dulled by an abiding sorrow; if to every little effort "weak Grief comes with her withered hand," is it strange that sometimes it sinks in utter prostration, and believes that *all* hopes must die in "languor and long tears"?

Let us, then, fix in our hearts for ever, the belief that *at all times* to do some good is possible; that we live, is proof enough that our Maker "has need" of us among our fellow-creatures; and when we really believe this, shall not we rise quickly from the dull sleep of melancholy, and employ our reason, while we implore His light for the discovery of that peculiar service for which the *unresembled* being of each one of us is designed?

Roscoe has remarked, when speaking of the youth of nations, a fact which I believe to be applicable to many individuals: — "Ignorant of that which relates to their immediate well-being, they attempt to rise into the realms of immaterial existence." . . . . . "It has been the most difficult effort of the human mind to divest itself of absurdity and error, and to quit its sublime flights for the plain and palpable inductions of reason and common sense; and hence the due estimation of our own powers, although it be of all sciences the most important, is generally the latest acquired."

There is such a satisfaction in doing our proper work, that this once found and entered upon with prudent energy, no place would be left in the heart for the intense stimulant of expecting death, and searching for intimations of its approach. Though, if I do not mistake, there is in early years a much looser tie between body and spirit, which makes the anticipation of death less appalling then than it afterwards becomes.

It is my belief that every year of earthly life more closely unites the opposing elements of humanity, and that even when the body is kept under, this wonderful material life gains upon the spirit; at least thus much,—that it dims many spiritual perceptions, and draws the mind more habitually towards bodily interests, till by degrees mental supremacy is almost shrouded in the apathy and humiliating weakness of extreme old age. This I believe to be the course of *nature ;* bright exceptions we may all know ; but who that has reached middle age will deny our fatal proneness to be overruled by bodily sensation rather than by reason and conscience? * Having before us the danger of this

* Those who are capable of deep reflection, and conscious of liability to sloth, or any other habit which gives the *body* predominating influence, would do well to exert themselves to read, and understand

encroachment of the animal upon our nobler part, every day of life's irrecoverable spring must be esteemed infinitely valuable; and just because it *is*, the ever-recurring question, "How shall I best spend it?" is beset with so many difficulties. If you have the docility of mind common to those whose natural powers are strong, you have probably put it in some form or other to every one you could consult whose judgment seemed to be worth having, and probably the opinions given have by no means agreed.

all they can of a treatise of Schiller's, "Ueber den Zusammenhang der thierischen Natur des Menschen mit seiner Geistigen." I cannot promise that it will be an easy task, even if read in the English translation; but so great is their danger *who will only attempt what is easy*, that an enlightened instinct of self-preservation might, I think, support them through the difficulties inseparable from subjects that require thought; and any one who *can* overcome these difficulties will find in Schiller's pages an adequate reward.

The warnings he gives are not too abstruse for every-day purposes:— nothing, for instance, can be plainer than this assertion of a sad and solemn fact when he says (speaking of the tyranny of prevailing appetites): "Wider die überhandnehmenden thierischen Fühlungen vermag endlich die höchste Anstrengung des Geistes nicht mehr, die Vernunft wird, so wie sie wachsen, mehr und mehr übertaubt und die Seele gewaltsam an den Organismus gefesselt." ("Against the overmastering bodily feelings the highest effort of the spirit can at last do nothing more: reason, as they grow, becomes more and more deafened, *and the soul powerfully fettered to the organisation.*") — *On the Connection of the Animal and Spiritual Nature of Man*, section 5. *Schiller's Prose Works.*

I can imagine, or rather remember, several, which are likely to have been applied to your indefinite inquiries. Some must have told you, with affectionate earnestness, "not to think so much about yourself;" to try and forget self more than you do; — excellent counsel! — if it were not so often accompanied by comments of a nature which make this more than ever impossible. Now we can no more forget self, till there is a degree of peace within, than we can forget the body while it is in sharp pain. When we can "charm ache with air, and agony with words," this general call to self-oblivion will succeed in its well-meant purpose, but we may, and we must do a great deal, when peace is restored, or before it is endangered, towards occupying our minds so fully with the interests of others, as to free ourselves from the plague of constant self-inspection. This is what the class of advisers just mentioned aim at; speaking sound truths, but in ignorance of the precise nature of your need. Another friend might answer in some such words as these of Mr. Adam's, in his "Private Thoughts:" "With regard to what I read or think, the question should be, 'Is it really interesting? Will such a speculation improve me in religious knowledge, or bring me nearer to God?' If it will

not, discard it at once." Give heed to words like these, but, I beseech you, not an unconditional assent: here is an occasion for exercising your keenest discernment; for under such expressions (used by the old, and not intended for beginners) have lurked the germs of many a plausible *pretender* to heavenly wisdom; by such many have been misled. In the true and comprehensive sense of this passage, no Christian can find danger; in the partial and mistaken acceptance of it, how many snares will every thoughtful mind detect.

Apply this rule to the cultivation of talents: suppose a taste for music or painting, and ask yourself how many in youth can *rightly* judge whether the pursuit of art will bring the soul nearer to God? Can the young see all its subtle bearings on spiritual growth? or even guess the measure of pure happiness that through this channel may reach them in the thirsty wilderness of after life? Have they, *now*, ought they to have, any adequate conception of the secrets of personal influence? And yet the unconscious powers to which we refer in the use of this vague expression *are* incalculably strengthened by every kind and degree of proficiency. I believe that by *any* advance towards perfection, by any sort of *well* done action, the creature glorifies the Creator. Piety

has been so often sadly associated with feebleness of judgment and of will, that religious people who increase their strength in any innocent direction, surely help forward the cause of religion. This belief, or, at least, this hope, may justly dignify in our eyes attention to the smallest accomplishments. I know that the eyes of heavenly contemplation are described by Spenser as both "blunt and bad" among earthly things; but I cannot see why they should be so in seeking those pleasures which diligence and the taste of a pure heart may attain.

To return to the advisers of the doubtful. There will be among them some whose buoyant spirit will incline them to feel your gravity oppressive; to think it unnatural, the result of cherished errors. They will, therefore, attack you with vigorous kindliness, determined on cure; they will call your doubts, and even your habit of reflection, morbid; and, while they prove the dissonance of your feelings with the universal cheerfulness of nature and their own happy temperament, almost succeed in persuading you that you can at once shake it off, and look only to the bright side of things. It happens, however, that often, just as they have brought you to own to a mind diseased, they unwittingly lose their only chance of prescribing for it effectively by a gay

protest against thought and *trifle weighing*. "This miserable trick of self-tormenting," they will exclaim; "why not go with the tide a little more, and take things as you find them?" "These trifles are not of consequence; why treat them so solemnly?" Enough; their spell is broken. You must for ever divide on that point, though much that they urged is undeniable, and truth you are too likely to forget. In act and word, in thought and feeling, you hardly find anything to be a trifle; and in withdrawing gently from a discussion that reveals irreconcilable differences of opinion, you will be tempted to apply to your adviser Fichte's description of the specimen: "Ihr möchtet wohl gern ein wenig vernünftig handeln, nur um Himmels willen nicht ganz."* There will be more difficulty in disposing of earnest entreaties to spend yourself no longer in the *various* interests of life, but to throw all your energies into charitable works; to let all other things yield to that by which our life will be tested at the Supreme Tribunal hereafter. The many ill-fed, ill-clothed, untaught, and unhelped, whose obscure troubles generally surround every home, are eloquently brought forward as incitements not to be resisted.

* You would willingly act a little reasonably, but, for Heaven's sake, not quite.

Nor let them ever be. By prayer for a larger share of Christian love, by every possible effort to do all the good to souls and bodies which our sphere of action allows, let us strive to fulfil our highly privileged duties; to minister joyfully to the fellow-members of Christ's spiritual Body. I fear it is seldom that we *fully* live according to our belief in this matter, though the words of the Bible are plain, and the promises, infinitely gracious, can shed a glorious hope round the meanest of our feeble services. But we are of little faith: with what coldness and apprehensive prudence our small charities are often performed! I would gladly think you open to every suggestion of those who place good works foremost in every scheme of employment. At the same time, I would have you beware of their tendency to narrow the scope of charity within the limits of what is tangible, or of what is *direct* in its aim; because the greatest blessings man can bring to his fellow man are frequently those of which no human eye can take cognizance, least of all that of the benefactor.

And yet they will be charities, and the result of all that makes beneficence acceptable,—of self-denial, sincerity, love, and the meekness of wisdom; but a result that reaches to the ends of God's mercy by a passage so indirect and unforeseen, that in it the im-

mediate will of man cannot be discovered. All may aspire to these charities while they labour humbly for self-improvement and submit to the discipline it requires; those to whom a liberal cultivation of mind is afforded may hope, while they suffer its peculiar trials, that they are to be instruments of peculiar force.

The question then remains thus modified: "What means of profiting other people does my sphere of action allow? You *must* answer this for yourself; since it is remarkable that the actions of each person, to a degree, blind or dim their perception of the worth of other kinds of action; and she who has spent many years in working for the poor with her hands, may not always see the equal fitness of the exertions of another in village schools; still less of those, *seemingly self-ended*, which occupy the studious cultivator of mental powers or artistic taste. If I may venture to offer an opinion where only conscience and an enlightened judgment can decide, it shall be this: that *first* the natural tastes, and then the means given, in your allotted circumstances, for their indulgence, are, so to speak, providential hints of the way in which time (when unclaimed by more determined duties) will be most advantageously employed.

Only see to it, that in such occupation, not pastime, but increase of ability is gained; and in *every* act, self-imposed or required by others, remember the words of your Master,—" He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much,—" as applicable to every worker, both for warning and encouragement. You may truly serve Him in that which appears least, in what is only done to please a child, to soothe an impatient person, or to break off an unpleasant personal trick of your own.

## CHAP. III.

"My intent is, without varnish or amplification, justly to weigh the dignity of knowledge in the balance with other things; to take the true value thereof by testimonies and arguments divine and human." — *Bacon's Advancement of Learning.*

THERE is great variety of opinion as to the advantages of mental culture, beyond the average measure allowed to well-bred women. To you for whom I write, the problem is more likely to be: "How can it be carried on most wisely?" then, "*Shall* I apply myself to self-cultivation?" for, with you, it is almost as much a necessity, in some shape, as daily bread; if it were not, your patience would not have lasted to this point of the mental chart, which I am endeavouring (though how imperfectly!) to draw out.

In these days, intellectual attainments are valued so highly, that there will be no danger of any young person forgetting *them* in her search for worthy aims; but the excess to which the admiration of intellect

is sometimes carried, will perhaps lead the way, in some minds, to a depreciation of it quite as unwise.

For, as Sir Thomas Browne remarked long ago, "Because the Apostle bids us beware of philosophy, heads of extremity will have none at all—an usual fallacy of vulgar and less distinctive brains, who having once overshot the mean, run violently on, and find no rest but in the extremes." In order to secure ourselves from false estimates of the worth of mental power, it will be well to set down, as clearly as we can, what is to be hoped, and what feared, from its utmost perfection. You may still hear strange doubts and stranger assertions on this subject: ridicule which seems to imply a latent contempt for any gain not reducible to coin, or personal effects; and praise that places intellectual power highest among the possibilities of a human being. Before I advance my own opinions on this question, I should like you to see how ably both sides of it have been treated by two well fitted to decide; by Miss Warburton, in the chapter upon Genius, in her "Letters on Happiness;" and by Mr. Ruskin, in the "Stones of Venice," vol. iii. page 49. If my acquaintance with literature warrants me in attempting to calculate the number of votes for or against high cultivation of mind, I may say that, for one writer, who on

any but exclusively religious grounds, has taken Mr. Ruskin's view of it, twenty have *unconditionally* urged the keenest pursuit of knowledge.

But are they justified in so doing by the verdict of Solomon? For woman one danger is obvious: absorbed in the invisible labour of the mind, how can she have her quick senses and delicate tact ever ready for the service of love? How shall she make home the blessed place it may be, if every day she is raising her inner life to thoughts for which those about her have no taste and no conscientious call? We must find a satisfactory answer to these questions, or give up for her the cause of strong intellect. The answer which satisfies my mind is this: nothing is created by God in vain; there is nothing in its nature good, that He wills to be without purpose. If a woman has a mind which hungers for knowledge, I believe she need not fear to seek it diligently: it is a call to wider usefulness, a trust for the good of others; she will love better, and serve those she loves more wisely, when the chambers of her brain are by knowledge "filled with all precious and pleasant riches*;" yet only so long as she entirely subordinates intellect to Christian devotedness. I suppose there is not a much more miserable crea-

* Proverbs xxiv. 4.

ture in this world than the clever woman, who in seeking first the enlargement of the *mind*, has forgotten her peculiar offices of tenderness and affection, alienated her heart from its truest nature, and with increasing aspirations after imagined bliss, has also increased the bitterness of every-day trials. How can she be happy who strives to quench her thirst for happiness in the scanty measures of a creature's mind, daily thwarting the designs of her Maker, neglecting her highest duties? These are shoals well known and "infamous for wrecks," but there are dangers as great, and more subtle in their effects, which should be acknowledged and carefully neutralised.

A mind highly cultivated is often very fastidious, and sad, and irritable from the frequent struggle it undergoes when brought into contact with average mediocrity. I think it is particularly addicted to these painful conditions when first the capacity for great and noble exercise stretches imagination beyond the limits of present things: at a riper age we have generally had experiences which incline more to humility and patience than to lofty hopes. But the cruel passion of Disgust sets upon the young heart with prevailing weapons; and there are times when a sense of the baseness and spiritual penury to

which it attributes the cold contentment of others seems a hundred-fold worse to bear than any positive evil that could be inflicted on itself. I am unable, and should be unwilling, to describe all the manifold approaches of the distemper which I call Disgust for want of a better name: happy are those who do not know it, who have not felt this profound distaste for everything and everybody — this sickening of heart, when past, present, and future seem equally desert, and every energy is at a stand, craving action, but still aimless.

Fine powers of mind may intensify this form of suffering; but I am much mistaken if they will not, in proper training, considerably abate and by degrees overcome it. If you languish on what appears a barren soil, in what you believe to be the cold climate of self-complacent mediocrity, it depends on your own efforts whether *you* also sink into mental torpor, or rise patient and hopeful to a more serene and genial state. These efforts, sustained by a pure faith and continued prayer for increase of charity, will not fail to soothe both the sadness and irritability which arises from uncongenial society; and, what is still better, they may help you to discover unsuspected sympathies, and greater nearness to others than before seemed possible.

But from the loneliness of a mind whose springs of action are more from the spirit within than from its circumstances and the bodily constitution, I suppose there is no escape; every aspiring mind must be prepared for frequent isolation, but it is an isolation of which none need be aware or suffer from beside ourselves, and therefore no check upon a woman's best qualities. In a well-balanced soul it may be a vantage ground for the exercise of deepest love and most perfect sympathy, giving to it the privileges of a lofty tree, which *must* lift an unprotected head to the storm and summer heats, but which therefore can afford the wide shelter denied to its own superior growth. Like all other forms of inevitable pain, I hold the sense of isolation to be another *acquirement,* gained at our own cost for the use of others now, for our own blessedness hereafter.

Frequent warnings will reach you against pride of intellect: do not conclude from this that pride is the necessary consequence of its highest developments; for assuredly, unless we are more and more convinced of our folly, of our utter nothingness when left to intellect for guidance, this same intellect is in a weak state, and there seems small probability of any approach to true wisdom. The measure of man's

humility is, I imagine, the truest test of his comparative superiority: if you are not growing in unfeigned self-abasement, the knowledge which occupies your brain will only make your folly more striking to man, and more condemnable in the sight of God.

I fear, even more than "pride of intellect," the chill which it often seems to occasion in the heart; because the one is more likely to meet with social antidotes than the other. But if Schiller is right in warning us that some degrees of warmth are incompatible with a certain clearness of insight—

"Sie
"Geben, ach! Nicht immer Glut,
Der Wahrheit helle strahlen,
Wohl denen, die des Wissens Gut,
Nicht mit dem Herzen Zahlen!"—*

I console myself by believing that here also we may suffer for our neighbour's profit. The warm heart and its effusion of feeling, comforts indeed, but it is often blind in dealing with others — blind to their true good, while a strong mind, guided by love, can in many cases effect more help. It is, however,

* "Alas! truth's clear and brilliant rays
Are not for ever glowing;
How blest is he whose heart ne'er pays
For gifts from knowledge flowing!"

SCHILLER'S *Light and Warmth.* Translated by E. A. Bowring.

foolish to compare the beneficial results of two such variously working agents as light and warmth; and profitless, inasmuch as they are seldom to be attained by any effort where the tendency to either is not innate. Coldness of heart is also more likely to be a *cause* than an effect of clear intelligence, since strong feeling is a disturbing force which hardly allows the slow ripening of contemplative wisdom. It would save us from much unhappiness could we, once for all, resolve no longer to expect incompatible excellences either from our associates or from ourselves.

The propensity to dreaminess in minds of wide scope is an evil which I believe to be quite susceptible of cure; it is natural to all who are prone to expatiate in abstract thought, but so damaging to every power of the mind, that we cannot be too careful to avoid it by a close and patient discipline. Little matters of all kinds are the peculiar subjects of a woman's dominion, and if from her delight in sublime thoughts she fail to acquire the habit of attending to the minutiæ of present facts, she may interest by what are called fine ideas, in conversation; but for her home she is lamed; she is an organised mistake, in short *not* what *every* woman ought to be. Slovenliness of body offends the eye; as certainly

will slovenliness of mind bring shame and confusion to herself, regret and provocation to others. Think no time wasted that you spend in overcoming a natural impatience of detail. Accuracy of perception and wholeness of attention to one subject are costly advantages: I hope you will never learn their full value by the trifling but frequent disgrace of being found "in things that most concern, unpractised, unprepared, and still to seek." From the childish absurdities of pedantic display I suppose average good sense will preserve you; you will instinctively avoid the disagreeable trick of "dire de grands mots, et clouer de l'esprit à les moindres propos;" but bear in mind, as a caution, that the greater your attainments the more need you will have of minute attention to all that softens manner — to all the delicate mysteries of courtesy; you may otherwise find painful proofs of what Mde. de Maintenon told one of her pupils, "trop d'esprit humilie ceux qui en ont peu." "Soyez en garde contre le goût que vous avez pour l'esprit" is her advice; be careful never consciously to make your superiority felt, is, I think, more to our purpose.

It is easier to bring forward some of the main objections to intellectual ambition, than to enumerate half the blessings to which it may lead. We

have no exact terms for them, because the real enriching of the mind is a process too deep for human perception. And though I have admitted that it is often the cause of suffering, and always involves us in really hard work, yet this increase of trouble and susceptibility of pain is as nothing compared to the reward even *here:* for all we most value — for virtue and love, for truth and liberty — we *must* suffer before we obtain; and who that is worthy of either will deliberately shrink from suffering which proves our immortal nature, and its glorious destination?

That which we have to fear and avoid when striving to increase our talents, is a mistaking of their purpose; delighting and resting in them as if *they* were our portion and spiritual stronghold. In the present alienation of our nature from what it was designed to be, we are liable to this fatal perversion of our Maker's gifts; and it is by His long-suffering mercy that we are withdrawn from such idolatry by perpetual checks from within and from without: when at the highest pitch of self-exaltation, how often, "lest she should fail and perish utterly," the soul is "plagued" with "sore despair."

I am anxious to establish a settled belief in the advantage of enlightenment, because without such a

belief our efforts to improve our faculties will be wavering and unsatisfactory. "A principle," says Steele, "that is but half received, does but distract instead of guiding our behaviour." Observe that if I have presumptuously urged my own opinion, and in the strength of private convictions overlooked many opposing facts, which, fairly stated, might prove what I have said to be full of error, I have at least made no pretence of close reasoning; of this, I believe, both my own mind, and the subject before us, are incapable. And again I must remind you, that the benefits of which I speak so confidently are only attainable when cultivation of mind is carried on with a fixed determination to make it the servant of our higher faculties. The question of much or little reading is to be considered as a means to this end, and has been discussed by so many admirable writers, that I need not again go over their ground. If you have not already met with these works, — Todd's "Student's Guide;" Miss Warburton's "Letters to my Unknown Friends" and "Letters on Happiness;" and another valuable work called "Woman's Rights and Duties," — I hope you will become acquainted with them as soon as you can, and draw from them much available counsel. Let me suggest for your consideration a few self-imposed rules, which in many

years of assiduous reading I have found useful. Read no book rather than a weak one. Try to read the best that have been written on both sides of a disputed point. If you *cannot* give your whole attention, close the book; if only you *will* not, struggle to tear your thoughts from every other subject but the one to which you intend to give them: it is often a hard struggle; but when this victory is fully gained, you have at your disposal an unusual and an enormous force of mind. As one step towards this self-conquest, you will do wisely to resist the temptation of turning over the leaves, *to look on;* we call it hope when we try to look on to future pages of life, and we know how much tormenting folly the practice leads to; in a course of reading, it is simply an idle habit of wandering from present work, of snatching enjoyment without the restraint of concentration. Look back in your book as often and as long as your patience lasts, but never dull a wholesome appetite by the pernicious habit of skimming, when once you have resolved to read a book through. Of course in some cases the power of looking through a book rapidly is valuable; for, as Bacon tells us, "some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested:" and perhaps we must practise it, more or

less, with all writers of whose ability we are not certain. Of the average run of modern books, I am afraid it is too true that

> "Who reads
> Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
> A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
> * * * * * * *
> Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
> Deep versed in books, and shallow in himself."
>
> MILTON.

Two of the most useful things a patient student can acquire are the powers of concentrated and of comprehensive thought. Unless you are gaining these, much of your time for reading is wasted, wasted for the present; forming a bad habit for future hindrance. You cannot be ignorant of the bad effects of overloading the mind with more than it can thoroughly appropriate; if you are fond of reading, take great care that you do not do this: if you will take pains to examine yourself often as to what ideas you have taken in, what impressions have been consigned to memory, what clear shapes stamped on the imagination, you will gain from books real *possessions*, and not only pastime. You may object to this that I am prescribing for a reader who has already strong powers of mind, who has already "inured" herself "to works of science and

argumentation:" not so,—I would fain have one or two such readers, though they can get help from many a richer vein of instruction; but to those least studiously inclined I would say the same, and fall back for support on the good old axiom, "What is worth doing at all, is worth doing well." I believe entire idleness to be less hurtful than the negligent attention of a divided mind; and I think we should do well to ponder on what Dr. Chalmers remarks of the "vast importance of the faculty of attention, both as the intermediate link between the moral and intellectual parts of our nature, and as the great instrument for the cultivation of the heart."

One hears a good deal about the severe requirements of our modern standard of education; but I fear it has not led to a very accurate amount of knowledge, in the greater proportion of your contemporaries: if you only care to know about as much as other people *generally* do, you have a tolerably easy task before you. Yet even that degree of knowledge must be thorough in its way, or you will be in danger of frequent blunders, and all the humiliation of a pretender.

While arguing in favour of the highest branches of study, I should be sorry to leave lighter reading unnoticed, because I am convinced that its use is

frequently underrated, in theory; practically, we all understand the refreshment of an amusing book; but most of us, finding the pleasure we derive from such reading too great to be given up on the least occasion of duty, seem willing to make amends for the *abuse* of a daily blessing by occasional condemnations of it in cool judgment.

Now in this matter, sober judgment and eager delight are not incompatible; find the right time for light reading, and keep to that time, and reason will give it full sanction. It is indeed recreation, by which our jaded energies are quickened anew. Desultory reading, the aimless loitering over any book, idle or grave, that falls in your way, will seldom if ever recreate; but I believe an attentive half-hour given to *any* able writer will. If you refuse, on any grounds, the humble services of diversion now and then in the course of each day, believe me the powers of your mind and your body will both be lessened; nothing is so sure to enfeeble them as a strain too prolonged.

The young have been warned against the ill effects of works of fiction ever since good and wise people have been able to write; let us understand what these pernicious works are. A one-sided party history; an exaggerated portraiture of cha-

racter in biography; moralisings that ignore what human nature really is, and careful siftings of theological arguments no longer opposed, with many other well intentioned, but weakly executed writings, are, in my opinion, more dangerous, more full of fiction, than hundreds of the novels and poems included in this suspected class of books. For a novel or a poem that is really worth reading has its whole *essence* based on *truth;* it is the artistic development of truths too subtle perhaps for the notice of common observers, but too deep-rooted in humanity to be unrecognised by all, when uttered. You cannot be too familiar with such works when their magic is unsullied by moral impurity; and from acquaintance with those that are, either the warning of friends or your own instincts will, I trust, for ever deter you.

I know that I advocate an opinion that will be scouted by many, when I profess no great reluctance to young minds feeding largely on romances, and even second-rate novels. I look upon it as a temporary disease which will pass away harmlessly *if their nobler appetites are at the same time supplied with suitable provision.* While there is an inclination for the rubbish of literature, I firmly believe it may be *satiated* without permanent damage; and perhaps

the soil on which all the novelist's trash was piled may be left something richer for that incongruous accumulation. The heart itself, the imagination of which is only evil continually, will, unaided, produce the wildest and the most perilous webs of fiction—and cherish them with a closer grasp when they have the prestige of being unparalleled by any external impression: whereas the novel reader finds her tender dreams tossed about in broad daylight, and suffering all the vicissitudes of the first, second, and third volume. Her own emotions being thus vulgarised, and evidently worked up for sale, the reader must be an incurable if she continues to expect the perfect dénouement of her private romance, or the prolongation of third-volume ecstasies.

I should not dare so openly to oppose current doctrines on this subject, if a careful consideration of the full-grown novel reader and the mature abstainer from their stimulants had not made me feel towards these last something like the anxiety entertained for adults who have not had the measles. At so late an age both measles and novels may take a very serious hold on the constitution. For one of the many positive goods that we owe to novels, let me remind you of their service as looking-glass monitors. In them you may detect numerous little

flaws in your own habits of thought and action, which hardly any friend would have the skill, even if courage was not wanting, to make you aware of. And again, how useful they are for widening sympathies, and leading the imagination towards sorrows and difficulties which in your own nature you might find no trace of, and treat as groundless in consequence.

Many are from their circumstances unable to gain an enlarged knowledge of human nature as it appears in real life; and since, without a tolerably accurate estimate of humanity, the wisdom and leniency required in dealing with it are *impossible*, it is often profitable to study it in all the varieties which the novelist and essayist have represented.

Each may give a somewhat distorted, or at least an over-coloured, view of the human heart (that unfathomable abyss which we never weary of sounding); and familiarity with a *few* of such pictures may mislead; with many must in great measure correct false impressions, and restore to us a true perspective of life: even the glaring exaggerations of unskilled writers will serve to convey some truth to a sensible mind, by rousing it to conscious rejection of error. If, therefore, you will give an hour a day, suppose the most weary part of it, to the rest of what is often called *idle* reading, I venture to predict

that you will gain in tact, humility, and forbearance towards others. The companion whose last harsh word or look of unexplained dejection surprised you, may not choose, may not be able, to explain the cause of irritation, but your hero and heroine in the confidence of printed complaints will freely dilate on the origin of unsuspected grief, and afford perhaps the clue you want, — thereby enabling you (if you know the high privilege of insight) to "guess at the wound, and heal with secret hand."

## CHAP. IV.

"Well sounding verses are the charms we use,
Heroic thoughts and virtue to infuse ;
Things of deep sense we may in prose unfold ;
But they move more in lofty numbers told ;
By the loud trumpet, which our courage aids,
We learn that sound as well as sense persuades."

WALLER.

I FEEL great hesitation in entering upon the subject of poetic tastes; in part because my own habit of mind may lead me to place them too high among means of happiness.

If eyes fall on these pages to whom the very shape of verses promises weariness, who would rather be asked to read anything than a poem (I do not only mean the manuscript verses of a friend), let them skip here without pause. The taste for poetry is so clearly dependent on organisation, that, where it is entirely wanting, it would be vain to try to form it; equally foolish to regret its absence. I suppose there is always an insensibility to pain together with incapacity for thrilling pleasures; an adequate compensation for a faculty withheld. The

unpoetical mind is spared a hundred vibrations of pain that alternate with keen delight in a poetic temperament; still, it is from a *deficiency* in the one, and not, as many will have it, from morbid peculiarities in the other, that this difference exists. All I ask from the despisers of poetry is a candid recognition of this, and a freedom from the vulgar trick of laughing at what they *cannot* duly appreciate. No one is to be blamed for being without this or that taste; but good sense, and the modesty not always combined with common sense, are justly required from all. It is true that lovers of poetry are open to many reasonable attacks from the matter-of-fact professors: these charge them with a romantic handling of every-day affairs; an over delicacy; a tendency to exact high-strained expressions of feeling; an undue value for colour, and an ignorance of substance, in all their transactions.

There is truth enough in these accusations to serve as a warning. The joy you feel in lovely objects and beautiful thoughts may increase every year you live; but unless you are prepared to let go your hold upon things that are real though distasteful, to live at variance with society and nature, and to defy common sense, you *must* temper ideal pleasures with the wholesome bitters of experience, you must spare

no pains in gaining a thorough acquaintance with all such practical matters as may depend upon your care, and keep strict watch against your constitutional proneness to "monster nothings." A poetic eye sees things with quite another lens than that which is in common use; it does not follow that it sees things incorrectly, it may be as the magnifying glass of the telescope, by foresight seeing objects in larger proportions than they have yet assumed to the more careless glance, but each sharp stone detected on the distant road is often actually there, and may be felt by all by and by; or it may anticipate the diminishing powers of memory, and throw into the miniature frame of retrospect threatening obstacles, or gaudy pomps of to-day; and so see things as indeed they soon will be. That for which this marvellous eye is most dim-sighted, is common perspective; hence many grotesque contrasts between the views of the poetical and the practical observer. Also when it is turned inward to study emotions, so much colouring from pathos and imagination is added to inevitable sorrow, that harder natures are to be excused if they lament over a poetical, as a *sickly* turn of mind. But let these stout champions of common sense have patience, they see only one small part of the sensitive nature; it is, let me be pardoned

for saying so, wider and deeper than they know: these same victims of sentimentality have an elastic strength that will astonish when it is elicited; and a tenderness of heart, when enlarged by true Christianity, that will strangely soothe those who were wont to pity their softness, should *they* be smitten down by griefs not imaginary, in this world of sudden changes.

It will then be found that the dreamers understand the sorrow of others; though *theirs* have been the subject of wonder or ridicule; utter prostration of mind and entire abnegation of hope as soon as thick clouds darken around, they recognise, for what were called fanciful miseries, gave them a long training in every variety of sadness. They can now offer the sympathy they could seldom, if ever, receive. "'Tis all men's office to speak patience, to those that wring under the load of sorrow;" but these whimsical minds feel it most especially theirs, and are sometimes skilful in all the arts of consolation.

Perhaps no mental endowment is so easily perverted, overgrown, or lost as the poetic taste; though nearly resembling an instinct, it will often die out when unnourished, and still more frequently is it warped in a wrong direction by subjection to the rules of popular and superficial critics.

Beware of excessive influence from literary tyrants if you would have your pleasure in poetry pure and deep; dare to indulge your own opinion of what is and what is not poetry in the books you read—yet only as an individual predilection, not as a fair criterion; this at an early age it can hardly be. The poetry which now charms you has merits, assuredly, that deserve some admiration, but it is very probable that you will have exhausted this charm and found a higher standard of poetic excellence in a few years' time. It is now perhaps the feelings, the thoughts conveyed in verse that most attract you; if your nature is framed to taste the truest beauty, you will find yourself by degrees, what I must be allowed to call, more *disinterested* in your admiration; and the form, the music, and perfect symmetry of a poem will then be more precious to you than the moral or sentiments now, though pleasure in these will remain. Be prepared, however, to find yourself in an honourable minority at this stage of advancement. Hundreds of people, women especially, believe they love poetry in its highest sense, because they welcome like the voice of a friend sweet verses, rich in pathos and powerful in the description of well-known sorrow and oft-felt consolation; but they would feel precisely the same *kind* of delight in hearing an

eloquent sermon, or elegantly expressed aphorism; and were you to try them with a few pages of Keats's "Hyperion," or with Tennyson's "Dying Swan," their evident restiveness under the infliction would satisfy you of the mistake they are under. Would not many ask what was the point, the moral of such poems? what was aimed at? wishing for a definite result of all these fine-sounding lines. You must, as gently as you can, set aside a question whose true answer you may perhaps feel without being able clearly to express it.* Who can explain why that which to others seems "a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong," is to them full of delicious magic? Has the low thunder of an advancing tide any defined meaning? the serene surprise of a summer daybreak or the sighs of a gusty wind in fading woodlands, any distinct message to the heart? They speak to it, indeed, but in a tongue "no man can understand;" those whom they affect with sudden ecstasy know not *why* such vague impressions tell of immortality, and soothe so many of the ills of life, yet they would not exchange these

* Nichts streitet mehr mit dem Begriff der Schönheit als dem Gemüth eine bestimmte Tendenz zu geben."—*Schiller's B. über æsthetische Erziehung*, Brief 22.

Nothing is more opposed to the idea of Beauty, than giving the mind a definite direction.

moments of rapture for all the dull satisfaction that the understanding can measure. To them "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever;" and in nature such joys are everywhere to be found. If this source of happiness is open to you, strive to keep it pure by humility and thankfulness, to avoid any obtrusive notice of your tastes when you ought to see that they *cannot* be shared by your companions. You probably owe these refined enjoyments not only to natural gifts, but also to the leisure which enables you to give them free play; do not then expect them to be understood by those whose days have been spent in toilsome labours of mind or body, still less by those who have been engrossed by affectionate cares, so occupied with living objects that any notion of isolated pleasure is foreign to their thoughts. Contempt or depreciation of unknown blessings in persons of strong bodily mould is often excusable on the score of buoyant animal spirits; but should *you*, even in thought, despise another for want of tastes, in great measure attributable to the immunities of a delicate frame, that breach of wisdom and love will render you far more pitiably deficient. When this contemptuous tone of mind prevails (that there are temptations to it cannot be denied), ostentation and a vain-glorious love of your own refinement is seldom

far off, and from truth and real beauty you will fall apace. You who scorn another for the lack of what you possess, unconsciously claim and inevitably seek admiration for that possession. If given to this foolishness, I entreat you to take St. Paul's words—"What hadst thou that thou hast not received?" and preach to your own heart the sermons which will best arouse it.

To return from considering the abuse of a noble gift to the means of its due exercise. I think it is best nourished by variety of style: favourite books of course will be selected, and their beauties rooted in the mind "never grow sere;" but it is of great importance to acquire a liberal taste, an aptness to detect and welcome true poetry in every disguise of fashion in which it exists.

It seems to me a mistake to compare writers whose only point of resemblance is vivid poetic feeling, whose expression of it is necessarily as different as their natures and circumstances were; and it surprises me to hear Crabbe and Scott, or Byron and Keats gravely compared, almost as amazing to my mind as the frequent assertion that since Milton, or Pope, or any other emperor of the speaker's imagination, no great poet has been born. Among our young contemporaries we generally find either

Wordsworth or Tennyson raised to this solitary height of admiration, yet I doubt whether a mind given to this monarchical system in the domains of taste adequately enjoys even the genius it idolises. We owe this disease of comparison, this childish partisanship, in great measure to the critiques of some of our once popular reviewers; they were expected to decide upon the merits of certain writers, who appeared to them more as candidates for their approval than as those to whom the gratitude of succeeding ages is due. This error naturally threw the mind of the judge into a wrong attitude, and the consequences, the trifling tone of shallow criticism, the sneer at sublimity beyond their compass, and emphatic praise of smooth mediocrity followed of course. All this would be provoking if reviewers were not so unenduring a tribe, and if their attacks were always directed by consistent rules of criticism; but like true servants of Fame, they give such varying verdicts on the same things, we have known such outbreaks of ridicule at the opening of a first edition, and so sudden a clamour of praise when the fifth and sixth were run through, that the poet must quickly learn to brush off both their honey and their stings, and the public to choose for itself.

I shall not attempt to notice the *peculiar* claims of

each of our celebrated poets on your admiration, lest you should think mine overstated; and if I tried to do so, I could only point out some few of their mighty arts. One valuable preparation for *all* reading I propose — a belief that the readers of by-gone years were as *likely* to have a correct taste as ourselves, and a respectful wish to be pleased with what has instructed and charmed hundreds of our predecessors. Since their time we may have gained clearer light, and the utterances of genius on some particulars of which they were ignorant; but they have bequeathed to us, undiminished in genuine worth, writings once deemed incomparable, and it is our privilege to enjoy both the old and new treasures of literature.

It may be that the tendency to rejection in early life is as much a proof of mental vigour as the kicking force is in childhood of bodily robustness. You have certainly much trash of all dates to choose from; all I desire is that exclusiveness should not be considered a mark of good or fine taste.

There is one poet from whose wide empire no age or individual peculiarity ought to exclude you; you cannot be too familiar with the writings of Shakspeare, you cannot admire them too much. One generation after another tries to express the delight and astonishment this man causes to his fellow men,

yet his genius remains beyond the reach of analysis, superior to all praise, and in sympathy with every heart.

When I wish to speak in the behalf of imagination, as a high faculty deserving the most patient culture, I feel strong in my own convictions, but weak to express them. And I think I am unsupported by precedent. At this time I cannot recal more than one great authority*, among English writers, who has sounded on this string the réveillée of reason: yet the restless activity of English minds, and their covetousness for tangible results of action, especially need balance from this neglected power. The following passage from Coleridge's Literary Remains, was the first in which I found its value *duly* recognised. "In the imagination of man exist the seeds of all moral and scientific improvement; chemistry was first alchemy, and out of astrology sprung astronomy. In the childhood of those sciences the imagination opened a way, and furnished materials on which the ratiocinative powers, in a mature state, operated with success. The imagination is the distinguishing characteristic of man as a progressive being, and I repeat that it ought to be carefully guided and strengthened as the indispensable means

* Francis Bacon.

and instrument of continued amelioration and refinement." Since his time Ruskin has not suffered the subject to be forgotten; in Schiller's Letters on Æsthetic Culture, we are furnished with the fullest examination of it, and I believe that whoever wishes to gain insight into the principles of taste, to know the true relations of beauty to the soul of man, and the *discernible* operations of the imaginative faculty, must read these admirable letters; some labour of mind is required for their study, either in their original language or in translation, but all that is given will be richly repaid.

Though on first reading the only immediate gain will be a clue, thrown out here and there, leading to deep mines of wisdom, yet whoever is capable of enlightenment as to their mysterious contents, will esteem these to be of incalculable value, and year after year will draw more largely upon the secret wealth. That one of the main uses of imagination may be understood, I shall give Schiller's own words from another of his essays: he is speaking of different styles of writing, and among them of the highest order, that in which both the understanding, and what he calls the *representing* power, are appealed to; and he says, that such a style will secure comparatively few readers: "Denn so selten es schon

ist, auch nur denkende Leser zu finden, so ist es doch noch unendlich seltener solche anzutreffen, welche darstellend denken können."* "For rare as it is already to find *thinking* readers, it is yet infinitely more rare to meet with those who can think and image" (that of which they read). My loose translation is a clumsy medium for the precision of Schiller's terms, and I refer you to the admirable essay from which I quote for fuller explanation of their purport,—it is this rare operation of mind that he speaks of, to which I believe more attention should be given: the power by which we vividly *imagine* the things of which we think. It is natural to some, let it be prized by them as a great advantage; it may be acquired with difficulty by others; it *must* be, if we would not sacrifice one of the most potent faculties of the human mind to the evil habit of being only *passively* impressed,—the common folly of overloading a torpid brain with words that convey no definite idea, and mental pictures too faintly coloured to awaken even a passing interest in their meaning. Words were originally more or less accurate representatives of things; they

* Schiller, Ueber die nothwendigen Gränzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen.

are now often used as vehicles of imperfect thought and uncertain feeling; an unavoidable use of language when thoughts and feelings are as closely observed as external objects; but it is a use which deadens imagination. We know that in the mind of children every page of a story is supplied with scenery so clearly painted that after-years often leave it undisturbed in the depths of memory; and why is this sharp impress wanting in the more mature intellect? Not only from the accumulation of impressions, not only from the dulling tendencies of age, but I believe mainly from the confusion of notions and images that pass over inattentive minds, and the gradual weakening of imagination either from satiety or starvation: either will make it languish; a constant succession of exciting tales will make it impossible for the mind to surround each crisis with imagery; while total abstinence from all stimulus causes apathetic reception of it, when at last it is applied. I suppose no one will deny that if they could read any recital of history or fiction, with the whole mind absorbed, vivifying the description of all that was done, and sympathising in all that was felt, they would not so often be obliged to say, "I read all about it a very little time ago, but really I cannot now remember the particulars. I

think it was so and so." To my mind a mortifying confession which amounts to, "I spent time to little or no purpose, and all I know now on that subject is, that I ought to know more." Of course the faculty of memory may be naturally weak in some cases, and its hold incurably slight; but this is surely an exceptional plea for excuse.

We lay the blame on authors, and a large share is their due, for undeniably many have written in a manner that insures vague information while we read and entire forgetfulness when we shut the book; but not *only* do we owe to ourselves the vexatious folly of reading a weak book: we have, when confused impressions are our habitual earnings, indulged lazy habits, we have allowed our minds to be passive when they should have been vigorous agents.

There are, in this business, no exceptions to Schiller's rule, "*Der Geist besitzt nichts, als was er thut.*"* If you read with spiritual keenness, as well as with bodily organs, could you so soon forget? And this brings me back to the use of poetry, in which the strong stamp of passion, or the lightning glimpse of more than earthly beauty, fully rouses the imagination; under such influence it acts, it fills its mysterious arena with brilliant or sombre

* The spirit possesses nothing but what it performs.

processions; it carries us to a world safe from the calamities of actual life; it surrounds us with the wealth of dreams, without their anarchy. It is these enchantments that the matter-of-fact adviser dreads; jealous of these imaginary crowds, fearing their intrusion unsought, their fruitless occupation of time and power applicable to external affairs: a very reasonable fear; imagination is as a slave most serviceable, but an inflicter of hard bondage if once we submit to her rule. Self-control must never sleep in a mind that can taste her intoxicating nectar; under the check of temperance it proves a precious and invigorating draught.

And let me ask the exclusive lovers of business, the despisers of fiction in every shape, what are their day-dreams, what inmates do *they* allow in their "chambers of imagery?"

Within some, I suspect, a certain well-known form in ever-changing attire is apt to cross the silent stage over and over again; with dignified bearing and modest gesture, refusing the affectionate homage of those pigmy shapes that stand round it in less brilliant light. The main actor is self; an old performer, who seldom fails to play an admirable part in this secluded theatre; elsewhere his incomparable abilities are less known; and these of smaller outline repre-

sent fellow-creatures who are probably compensated for their subordinate position here (should they happen to perceive it) by a more distinguished place in their own private theatricals. I may wrong many estimable persons by supposing their inner life so brilliant. In that hidden world self may still toil for *visible* gain, may receive unexpected profits, and surpass competitors in some line of emolument,—so tasting by anticipation the solid rewards of their diligence; many others will reject my statement with honest disdain, their imagination being constantly thronged with visions of beneficence, bright with all that hope promises may yet be done for the good of others, or filled with one dear presence in whose service self is only remembered as a help or a hindrance to the love it yearns for.

But none, I believe, will deny that, with some rare exceptions, self occupies this debateable ground of imagination, dreaming wilder dreams than any of us would care to confess: whether of ambition, or love, or worldly gain; whether we call them wishes or hopes, whether stamped by affection or the love of influence, self is still the centre of each, and as self is the only agent from whom we can draw *immediate* effects of *will*, it is right that it should be so; a law of nature which no wise person would seek to con-

travene, but like every other natural tendency, to be kept in due subservience.

And I ask every honest heart, does this habitual attention to self need encouragement, or check? Would it not be better to wean it by degrees from its narrow world, to give it escape to a calmer region? to introduce new elements of interest into this "jail-yard of personal relations?" This is done in some degree by vigorous cultivation of the imagining power; and therefore I plead for it, though at the risk of being as tedious on the subject as *Akenside.*

The only preliminary to a proof of my assertion is the question, "Have you the power even in embryo?" It may take some time to answer decisively; do not let sloth or contempt answer for you. If assured that you are absolutely without it, be then as certain that *your* nature does not need the sweet stimulus of poetry. Your refreshment lies elsewhere; you have no cause to regret this. Well might you regret time spent in trying to force up what the soil will never produce, for it is vainly spent, and will only serve to dishearten.

"Men may easily lay aside what they are, but never arrive at what they are not," in such concerns. But you who discover in your composition any germ of poetical taste, let no trouble deter from bringing

it to ripeness. We will consider what this trouble is; suppose you have a quiet half-hour in a well furnished library, or within reach of a few standard works; what is your choice when inclined for poetry? Longfellow? or Cowper? or Mrs. Hemans? Good, pure, and refined in feeling, they will be elevating companions; they have clothed piety and wisdom with elegance and true beauty of versification; but in reading their poems, you neither lose sight of self, nor extend your intellectual domain; you do not at all exercise imagination; what delights you in their writing is sympathy, a reflection of personal experience. You find your own feelings embellished, and you are soothed though the mind gains no enlargement. Could you by degrees *force* your attention to beauty which less easily attracts it; could you so lay hold of every word in which a poet like Spenser or Keats paints his magic glass, as to realise in your imagination the scenes that fired his; could you rise on the breadth of his love for all things great and small, and pierce with him to those depths of truth which make men to feel as if their own troubles were but a passing disturbance; to acknowledge that their

> "higher hope
> Is of too wide, too rainbow large a scope," *

---

* Keats's "Endymion."

for prolonged fretting over "myriads of earthly wrecks," you would have enjoyed a freedom far more refreshing, more suitable to an immortal, than this barren contemplation of your own emotions in the glass of another mind. But if you take up Spenser, or Keats, or Ariosto, or Tasso, it is perhaps heavy work: you yawn; you confess you do not "care for these knights and wonderful beings,"—and "as for Endymion, or Pan, or the Titans, what good is it for women not allured by classical associations to read of monsters who never lived? Here and there a pathetic line comes home to you, and justifies an approving pencil stroke, but for the rest it is not at all in your way. No, and just the habit of mind which gives rise to this distaste will in the course of time make *your* mind as inhospitable to any new idea as those of your too conservative elders, whom you accused of narrow-mindedness when last your notions were opposed by them, *because they were new.*

If we only choose to read what is already "in our way," our selection may end in being as compendious as the creed of the young man who told Dr. Johnson he could never believe anything more than he understood. To see the effects of this in larger characters we should look back to the poetry of the last ninety years' growth. With a few noble excep-

tions, all versifiers seem to have prostrated their office, by addressing themselves exclusively to *feelings*, or rather to the sentimental thoughtfulness which takes their place in circumstances that enfeeble the passions. The national pulse beating calmly during a long peace, it was natural that poets found more interest in the inner life of man, where mystery, and combat, and sudden woe, are never at an end, than in the respectable drowsiness of external prosperity — they left that to be photographed by the light of statistics, and animated by leading articles and cutting reviews. From the obscurities of the heart they drew their subtle web; with morbid self-scrutiny, they marked every shade of emotion, they analysed every tender thought and combined all the distracting antagonisms of social romance with amazing skill; and they made very free use of the darkest colours. I doubt if any previous age has said so much about "utter woe," rayless misery, blank immeasurable despair, and so on, as ours; for being, as I said, the *undergrowth* of rhymers, they were often servile, and exaggerated feelings as unscrupulously as self-love in the day it is wounded.

By degrees they reached a climax. I refrain from mentioning the names of those, who in my estimation soared highest among the clouds of sentimentality,

fearing to offend the taste of others; for their clouds are often lovely, and deserve some measure of our admiration: only they have this disadvantage, they are too far removed from the dear old earth on which we move, from our *true* nature, and *therefore*, paradoxical as it may sound, from true imagination. Hence, the climax was one of absurdity, and caused strong reaction. Just now, we have the benefit of this counter-current, and must expect to be carried by our small poets quite as far the other way. The cry now raised among us, is for more sensuous beauty in poetry: some modern writers seem inclined to present it to us in more entire undress than is well *outside* paradise; while many appear to me to combine passion and sensuous imagery with perfect success, and a *few* benefactors to the human race are awakening us to the noblest use of imagination.

It is common to complain of the dearth of true poets in our age, and it is often wondered at, as if the same results could follow from totally different conditions of society. When I perceive surprise on this head, either in my own mind, or in those of others, I compare it to the sighs of a slave to fashion, for the gaiety and simple grace of a novice.

After several centuries of attention to all that critics can say, and all that apprehensive respect-

ability can censure, after ceaselessly studying the features of our times, with an eye to their portraiture, is there any possibility of fresh impulse from the *unconscious* genius that delights us in the writings of our predecessors? Surely no; we forfeit their youthful charms, when we learn to combine artificial graces with the expression of genuine feeling. And so long as ridicule is more common among us than admiration, poets will not, *cannot*, sing as they did of old, when the reverence and affection of their hearers was secured to them.* I do not wish for an impossible return to the general want of culture which caused this, I only wish that this wide difference of manners should be remembered when we call our era unproductive of poetry.

For pathetic beauty, I suppose the

> " gentleness of old Romance,
> The simple plaining of a minstrel's song,"

is unequalled; but it is a step made in advance of our immediate ancestors, that the incomparable sweetness of elder poets is now so fully appreciated, that

*"Glückliche Dichter der glücklichen Welt! von Munde zu Munde,
Flog von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht euer empfindenes Wort:
Wie Man die Götter empfangt so begrüsste jeder mit Andacht
Was der Genius ihm, redend und bildend erschuf."
*See* SCHILLER'S *Die Sangen der Vorwelt.*

we begin to see that the instincts of genius in old time were more nearly allied to truth and beauty than the skilful talents which were once our boast.

I trust I have not so ill expressed myself as to be understood to speak disparagingly of those "poet kings," who in our own day "simply tell the most heart-easing things;" for I gratefully prize their thoughtful tenderness; nor would I imply that those whose tendency is to dwell on external objects are necessarily their superiors, for this I cannot for a moment believe: all I have endeavoured to show, is this — that higher pleasure, and more fruitful energy are developed by familiarity with the few who can people an *ideal* world, and animate us, until their visions are almost as bright as the remembrances of another. The chapters on Imagination in Ruskin's second volume upon Modern Painters will well repay you for close attention.

It would be quite beyond my province, as well as my ability, to enter upon the less ascertained offices of imagination; physicians of mind and body refer to its secret agency when they would account for many mysteries. The recent experiments of influence; all that hides under the term of electro-biology, opened to us glimpses of natural laws hitherto unrecognised; and for these we find no better name than "effects of

imagination." That it is not only powerful when acted upon, but itself a strong formative principle, is an old surmise of writers too ignorant of what we know, and too profoundly versed in much that we overlook, for the entire confidence of the present generation.

Leaving mysteries of this nature, for as much or as little consideration as you incline to bestow on them, I return to things more within our reach: making no apology for this long digression, because diet, either for the mind or body, is one of the main branches of regimen.

With regard to learning languages, I have myself a strong prejudice in favour of it, both as a discipline and as a key to unnumbered treasures.

It is a cheerful pursuit, because success in it admits of proof; progress is assured to you, and it entirely removes you from the associations of daily life —thus giving a wider range to sympathy and imagination. It is a great benefit to be induced to study the various lights in which the same fact or idea may be placed; to be frequently reminded that our own mode of thinking and speaking is not the only way, nor even the prevailing custom beyond certain limits; for from the days of Sully to the present time, the robust egotism of dear England has needed every antidote reason and experience could give to keep

it at all within bounds. Sully remarked, after his stay in England:—"Il n'y a point de peuple en Europe plus hautain, plus dédaigneux, plus enyvré de l'idée de son excellence; si on les en croit, l'esprit et la raison ne se trouve que chez eux. Ils adorent toutes leurs opinions, et méprisent celle de toutes les nations; et il ne leur vient jamais en pensée ni d'écouter les autres, ni de se défier d'eux-mêmes." This may be a caricature of our national propensities, but it is a likeness not to be mistaken, though taken three centuries ago. Indeed, you might think from some of the forms of speech current among us now, that good sense, orthodox piety, and simple eloquence, were our monopolies; you might be led to believe every German a sceptic, or lost in transcendant nonsense; every Italian a powerless slave to powerful passions, a stranger to philosophy; every Frenchman brilliantly vivacious, but without depth — for so have many determining minds labelled the unknown contents of foreign natures. However, as these aliens are all fellow-creatures, it is but just to give them credit for as much personal *individuality* of character as we claim for ourselves: and though we may after long acquaintance with their works lament that such and such faulty peculiarities are characteristic, we shall not again be so

childish as to sacrifice truth and charity to the propagation of an old prejudice.

Again, learning a language increases our value for each single word as well as for each several nation; it is a clumsy illustration, but one that may serve to give my meaning, to say that the difficult road by which every new word reaches the understanding, gives time to study its worth and investigate its origin, whereas, those used by us from infancy, hurry along a beaten path too rapidly for the scrutiny of reflection.

Whoever has compass of mind sufficient for receiving the teaching of Coleridge, knows the respect due to words. I have freely indulged in quotations from continental writers, with the hope that they might attract you to some of the pleasantest fields of literature. You may think you want time to acquire these languages; but will and perseverance are more commonly wanting in the educated classes. Half an hour every day, with a dictionary and the book whose contents you covet, will do wonders towards learning a modern language; and if you have not time for a more grounding system, *Ollendorf* will enable you to *read*, at least, with ease and accuracy in the course of less than two years. Diligence and close attention being supplied of course.

You may say, "I am not clever enough:" think again; are you not perhaps too indolent to have taken a fair measure of your abilities? The following words of advice given by George Herbert to a young brother, are worth considering: "Let there be no kind of excellency which it is possible for you to attain which you seek not; and have a conceit of your wit. Mark what I say, have a good conceit of your wit; that is, be proud, not with a foolish vaunting of yourself, when there is no cause, but by setting a just price on your qualities."*

Like many others prone to extravagance in the outlay of advice, I began meaning to disclaim the pretension of having any to give on the oft-trodden ground of literature; but it is dear to me, and even from a few more remarks upon it I will not refrain.

It seems to me, that we weigh the benefits of literature in an unjust balance, when we speak of its interests as, in any way, rivalling those of the *one thing needful;* seeing that it is never intended to be the glory and joy of our souls, but to occupy the many blank hours of life; to take the place which disturbing, fearful, vainglorious, or resentful imaginations will infallibly possess in our hearts if not strongly

* Letters of George Herbert in the vol. of his Remains.

counteracted. And yet, I confess with sorrow, that it is but too possible for the love of literature to have the same evil effect, *when unrestrained,* as the lusts of other things in choking the word, and making it unfruitful towards God. The variety of thought and feeling attained by much reading, though it serves to prevent the tyranny of passion, and to break the yoke of prevailing error, may also scatter the forces of the spirit: may, by degrees, lead us to rest upon human wisdom, to turn our minds away from the inexhaustible source of life and light and love, and to seek all supplies of strength in the scanty drops of human intelligence.

It is as if when invited to speak to the Most High, we referred our doubts, our difficult questions, to the dumb beasts; so dumb, and helpless, and undiscerning is the spirit of men when compared to His who in exceeding graciousness declares to man, "I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them."* Undoubtedly prayer is the noblest exercise of which the mind of man is capable; if to be fervent in prayer, is your ambition; if, as your strength permits, you press on to a fuller and more faithful communication with God, the many inferior occupations of your mind will only be an additional help; they

* Ezekiel xi. verse 5.

will be as fuel for the altar; and as you learn more and more of truth you will devoutly rejoice in the Saviour, who by truth has made you free.

As yet, this may possibly sound to you more the expression of what ought to be than of what is *really* felt by honest minds; but I can assure you, in this your inexperience misleads. A few more years of patient endeavour; of earnest fighting against sin and despondency, and you may come to a fulness of peace unimagined now: you may then joyfully acknowledge, that God has put a new song in your mouth.

I cannot state my belief in the use of much reading better than by quoting the quaint verses of Daniel, who says, so long ago as 1579:—

"And though books, madam, cannot make the mind
Which we must bring, apt to be set aright,
Yet do they rectify it in that kind
And touch it so, as that it turns that way
Where judgment lies; and though we cannot find
The certain place of truth, yet do they stay
And entertain us near about the same;
And give the soul the best delight that may
Encheer it most, and most our spirits inflame
To thoughts of glory, and to worthy ends."

## CHAP. V.

"He that will be acceptable must give beauty as well as strength to his actions. Solidity or even usefulness is not enough; a graceful way and fashion in everything is that which gives the ornament and liking. And in most cases the manner of doing is of more consequence than the thing done, and upon that depends the satisfaction or disgust with which it is received."—*Locke.*

POETRY is only one of the modes by which imagination is released from its morbid hold on personal emotions: if gifted with a love of art in any of its workings, you may find the same pure and exalting pleasures which I have already claimed as the birthright of a poetic mind. In some respects music and drawing have advantages superior to those of poetry: proficiency in these can be tested by the senses,—always a satisfaction to an embodied spirit,—and they also give delight to many who could receive little from the taste of a lover of poetry. So that in cultivating these talents, you prepare yourself to give more general pleasure, and you become accessible to a wider sympathy; they may therefore be of great use. The temptation to display, seems to me hardly worth combating, as if it was a *consequence* of such

cultivation, for I do not find it to be in any proportion to the abilities that might be degraded by display: on the contrary it often appears that, by a curious adjustment of human pride to human littleness, we are more apt to display our weakness and boast of our emptiness. If we do not pique ourselves on possessing knowledge and taste, it is probable we shall soon complacently distinguish ourselves from others, as having no pretensions to either. There is, it must be allowed, a tendency in the admirers of any art to overrate its worth,—at least when they think or speak of it as a necessary element of happiness; for though they may find it so, it is utterly foreign to the apprehension of many who are both sensible and happy. In England it is surely a contradiction of experience to speak of artistic tastes as indispensable. Your enthusiasm in their defence may often provoke ridicule, but this should only exercise sweetness of temper and skill in parrying blind thrusts without the assumption of superiority—which superiority you may secretly believe in, from being ignorant that beauty, like truth, touches different minds by means quite as different; so that the very people who speak scornfully of the peculiar objects of your admiration often revere those which command their own, with a deep and pure delight which you fancy them incapable of feeling.

It is the grave remonstrance against a systematic pursuit of beauty either in form, colour, or sound, as unsuitable for Christians, which will find you, I imagine, more defenceless, and perhaps check wholesome growth in your constitutional field of action, as hurtfully as the unrestrained worhippers of beauty would force it. I have no tried arguments to bring forward against the puritan's suspicious fear of beauty, for I rest a contrary belief on simple words of Scripture, James i. verse 17.: "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." If any reasonable creature can doubt that the power to enjoy and retain the beautiful impresses of divine love on a fallen world, is a good gift, and from the Father of lights, their opinions will be unaltered by anything I could say; for myself the profuse variety of loveliness in all the works of God, the infinite sweetness of outline, sound, and colour, on all sides of our daily paths, prove—till, to me doubting is impossible—that He would have us rejoice in beauty, and that in *seeking* for what is beautiful; while recognising in all we witness His tender mercies, we shall honour our Creator, and serve Him with an acceptable gladness of heart. There are thousands of good people capable of seeing the connexion between the *abuse* of ornamental

culture in mind and body, and sin: only a few (comparatively speaking) and those, I am persuaded, the wisest, who can see with a clear perception of adjacent dangers, the absolute duty of cherishing all that is beautiful in life. Thus, while volumes of excellent counsel have been poured into the mind, on the Puritan side of the question, only a few thrilling words have now and then escaped from daring thinkers on the other: only a few suggestions from poets and privileged vendors of theory have passed into the public stock of opinions uncensured. Hitherto this has been the neglected side of truth; but we have been deaf to a clear trumpet-note*, calling us to it during the last ten years with the vehemence of profound conviction, if for the future the most exalted pietists do not pay more respect to what contemptuous folly used to call "mere outsides." And this want of balance in the received stock of notions, is so far well, that it makes labour, and firm adherence to its results, inevitable for all who attempt to pass beyond prejudice and "rescue truth."

Think then, I pray you, of the hours you devote to any ennobling art as important sections of

* Listen to it in the "Stones of Venice," in the 181st page of the 3rd volume.

your life's work. Do not allow the harassing fancy that such occupation is frivolous, or unfitted to your high calling, to divide attention: but, on the other hand, let none of its fascinations tempt you to relax your strict obedience to conscience and reason, when either says, "Enough of this—more immediate duties await you."

What I have pleaded in behalf of the higher branches of handiwork, may, I believe, be applied in due proportion to the humble elegance of fancy needlework. All needlework is suitable to a woman, so that it is useful; but I do not see why that honourable term should *only* be applied to the construction of what is necessary, and often inelegant: at least, if the permanent nature of calico and linen work makes it deserve to be called full of use, I contend for this admission, that many pretty trifles are of *considerable* use, though it is not always so evident. If people are given to stupifying themselves over canvas work or embroidery, they would probably find the same satisfaction, if accustomed to it, in excess of sewing: the kind of work is not so much to be objected to, as the devotedness of a torpid brain to insignificant objects. An hour or two given to needlework each day will be good both for body and mind; but unless affection or duty require it, surely

we trifle with our time when we spend the greatest part of the day in needless stitching?

Last in acknowledged dignity, though in reality it occupies a broader place, is the art of dress: and do not let us despise it because in theory it is so often assigned to the care of triflers. Since by appearances we express ourselves to all around us, at all times of our life, it greatly concerns us that the expression should be habitually as pleasing, and as truly fitted to our nature and circumstances, as careful taste can make it. To dress becomingly requires a good deal of thought, and a patient attention to all the niceties of propriety; need one say more than this to prove it a woman's right business?

I think those who doubt its importance strangely disregard the testimony of those instincts—rooted in woman's nature—which, from the little girl's first sash to the last cap on the trembling head of the aged woman, cry out for adornment: when these are entirely wanting, there is disease either of heart or head. They may be indulged to a dangerous degree—too often they are; but our safety lies in directing them to lawful channels, not in a futile effort to eradicate what has been implanted by creative wisdom. I beg anyone who is surprised to find taste in dress insisted upon as a duty, to compare

their own feelings, some day when they happen to be especially ill dressed, with their usual tone of mind — I do not mean when untidy hair, soiled ribbons, or torn sleeves have been contentedly submitted to — for most healthy-minded women have what I can only call a body-conscience, which would justly trouble them in disorders of this kind, and they would be ashamed of them *as disorders;* but when there is a consciousness of some flagrant offence against the eye in point of colours; when a delicate silk mantle is worn over a common print dress, or any other such incongruity of style is manifest, do they then think dress a trifle? Or rather, do they *then feel* it to be so? Do they then forget their own externals as completely as well-bred ladies should in the society of others? Or are they painfully self-conscious, and inclined to fancy themselves the objects of remark? Would they not then agree with Pepys when he says, — "I, not being neat in clothes, which I find a great fault in me, could not be so merry as otherwise, and at all times I am, and can be, when I am in good habitt, which makes me remember my father Osborne's rule for a gentleman to spare in all things rather than that." Without accepting "Father Osborne's" rule unconditionally, and being aware that peculiarities of temperament

may expose us to an undue sense of this sort of annoyance, I yet believe that if this uneasiness does not accompany any glaring mistakes in dress, there never will be an instinctive sense of what is becoming (or appropriate), and the insensible dresser must consent to draw her rules of taste from those who have it—for by all means let every woman try to look as well as she may within her natural and pecuniary limits; and never let the happy liberties of home be pleaded as an excuse for a distasteful appearance: nowhere is it more essential to happiness to be pleasing *in every way and at all times.*

We cannot, very many of us, be pretty or remarkably graceful, but the pleasantness of a neat and good-humoured look is denied to none who seek it with a right intention. As so many homes are beset with the anxieties of a narrow income, it is impossible that all should be well-dressed according to the world's standard of fashion, or according to the habits of equals in rank; in these circumstances good taste would look upon any attempt at fine ladyism as the most ugly absurdity into which an affectionate woman could fall. When the purse is very empty there must be many a weary altering and turning of old materials, in order to make the scanty supply of clothing even wearably *neat;* but when this trial of

poverty is borne with noble Christian courage, and its many painful humiliations are soothed by Christian contentment, there are spiritual graces adorning externals which, to every right minded observer, far surpass the charm of elegance and freshness of attire. No restrictive circumstances need hinder a woman from being neat; and perfect neatness is no trifling embellishment. Again, when new things are to be bought, though low prices can only secure commoner materials and coarser texture than taste desires, it may still be gratified by pure, sweet colours, nice fit, and fine work, and so produce all the most pleasant effects of dress. Believe me, they help to increase the sunshine of home life more than philosophers often imagine.

Perhaps I should be telling tales more strange than true, to the feelings of others, if I tried to explain the temptation which may be prepared for our daily companions by neglect of personal appearance; yet it is well that all should know how much the few may suffer from what literally hurts their eye. It may be from extreme irritability of nerve, or the penalty paid for great delicacy of organisation, that some people as unfeignedly wince at an awkward adjustment of dress, or a bad combination of colours, as others do from an unjustifiable discord in music, and all from a sud-

den blow: they often struggle in vain to forget such ridiculous causes of annoyance, but the frightful shape of a bonnet, or the brightness of a blue bow, outshining a light green trimming, meets their disliking eyes, and reason is driven backward. The unconscious tormentor is perhaps aware that something has jarred with the fastidious mind — something "gone wrong"—but never guesses the immediate provocation: and even between friends and near relations there may be many barriers of timidity or temper, on the one side or the other, which prevent a candid avowal of the cause of disturbance. And, besides, there is generally a fund of disgusts and miserable fancies at the bottom of it, to which some chance piece of ugliness only gave the last impulse. A person who has striven for hours against heart-sickness and self-loathing, is withheld by pride at least from an explosion of complaint when a sister or friend goes about in a singularly ugly guise; but the drooping spirit murmurs to itself that this is but a specimen of things in general, "like all the rest of it." Life is that *it*—just then a heavy burden to be borne. Let none laugh contemptuously at this, or blame severely in the strength of right principles; for if it was known what in these dark times the distempered spirit undergoes, the gentlest pity would

not seem tender enough: and why ask the cause? Have any of us lived to be twenty years old and not known or seen the pressure of *causeless* melancholy? Can we be ignorant of this, that in some natures, as far as the mood of the day goes, and sometimes in spite of brave Christian resistance,

> " A thick blood's film, a passion's gust,
> Nay, the most natural, most just
> Impulse — a part of Nature's plan —
> A pride — a shame — can undo man " ?
>
> JOSEPH DOWNES.

This seems an odd subject to bring into connexion with ribbons, but I believe the memory of those who smile most at its introduction here will justify it as not wholly irrelevant. Where the terrible force of association is a familiar fact, its influence in our perception of externals will be urged against me; for it may be said very fairly, " How really charming ugly colours, stiff patterns and the like, have appeared in remembrance, and during their presence, when worn by amiable people, and how one has hated the studied elegance of proud disagreeable associates!" I grant this, but not only do I believe it to be an exceptional case, I am also convinced that had the beloved person been endowed with better taste, he or she would have been still more delightful; while on the other hand I reckon it a slight compensation for the evils we

suffer from unamiable companions to be spared that of superficial uncomeliness.

It is so difficult to do justice to the claims of the eye, without giving them attention disproportionate to the objects of this book, that I shall leave them to feminine mercy — entreating my young reader to observe how distinctly they differ from the restless desires of vanity; and to remember always that neatness, pureness, and finish, are charms which *all* may secure; and that even before your own taste can be formed, or allowed to arbitrate in the choice of dress, you may, in complying with that of others, add to it these crowning perfections, and cherish the ornament of great price, the "meek and quiet spirit."

## CHAP. VI.

"Our words and actions to be fair must be timely."
R. W. Emerson.

"I believe it is best to throw life into a method, that every hour may bring its employment, and every employment have its hour."
Dr. Johnson.

Multitudes of wise people have believed this, and very many proved it by their life-long practice; it is perhaps one of the first pieces of advice offered to dissatisfied youth; if ennui, or the deeper weariness of a doubtful mind is detected, methodical habits are prescribed as confidently as the use of tonics for bodily weakness. Though inclined warmly to advocate a regular disposal of time, I think such advice unsuitable when the main deficiency is that of a settled employment; it seems to me something like recommending accuracy in keeping money accounts when the money itself is wanting. It is true that all have time to deal with, and all heavy responsibility for the use of time, but if the occupations of the day are so inadequate to our powers as to leave them

half torpid, so frivolous that the will cannot apply to them its strong prevailing grasp, or so contrary to it that they occasion continual antagonism—to appoint to *them* regular portions of time, and to be punctual in passing from one trifling business to another in the succession determined upon, may soothe a weak mind but will never satisfy the cravings of a powerful one. For such there is no hope of peace, no possibility of happiness, till external pursuits are brought into harmony with their capacities, till their daily avocations are ennobled by the light in which they are viewed, by a holy devotedness, or by what is less uncommon, the perception of useful tendencies in much that has been before disdained as trivial, and almost loathed as a vain waste of energies. But how many at all periods of their life misapprehend the relations of commonplace things to spiritual interests; how many, not all lovers of art, "reject life as prosaic, and create a death which they call poetic;" * or, it may be, more rational, more refined, in some respects better than that monotonous little department of the world to which they are bound by Providence! Granting that there *are* base and unworthy concerns in life, which may drag us down by degrees to a lower position than that which our natures were fitted

* Emerson.

to occupy, we must guard with vigilant humility, against this disease of quarrelling with *circumstances*, never forgetting that when it is impossible to change them, it is always in our power to make them fruitful of much good, and not a little happiness. I do not refer only to the reconciling influence of Christian submission, though without this the undesired lot must seem intolerable, but to its *active* workings in the mind of an intelligent being, who, knowing that all things work together for good to them who love God, counts it a dishonour to love, to limit expectations of that disguised good to the single operation of patience (though that is a mighty, and may be a perfect work), and who, therefore, dares to anticipate with sweet confidence a variety of blessings from the clouds which darken the immediate prospect. This is that resting on the "lap of Providence," which recruits every faculty, and prepares us, while we wait for the advantages withheld, to make a diligent use of *all* with which we are entrusted. For this purpose, we must know what these are, and carefully endeavour to increase them. According to the sad experience of Edward Irving, "a meagre and unsatisfying recollection of occasions lost, and time misspent," is the portion of almost every man; but why should it be so? Why should we not every

day, and every hour, sow good and precious seeds?* Be sure of it, there is enough for each one of us to do in the exercise of powers peculiar to each, to supply abundant value to the most commonplace circumstances. And in this, no exception can be made either for mediocrity or high degrees of ability, the dull must work hard to quicken an apathetic or trifling turn of mind, and the clever must strive to secure the best usury for their many talents. Genius has been rightly called "the power to labour better and more availably than others." There is indeed nothing more patient in toil, more unremitting in pursuit, than true genius.

Let us suppose then that after complying with all the just claims of others upon your time, you find some part of every day at your own disposal, and often spend a good deal of it in considering what you had better do next: will not a fixed plan be of service then? You need never be so far a slave to it, as to give it unwise authority in cases of peculiar requirements: you need not read when in pain or anxiety, because the hour for history reading is

* "Jede rechtschaffene That, die wir gleich einer nützlichen Saat ins Leben hinein streuen, bringt uns Segen aus demselben zurück."

Each rightly done deed that like a useful seed we scatter in life, brings back to us a blessing out of it.

*Zschokke's "Stunden der Andacht."*

come; nor persist in staying for another length of time at the piano, when clouds warn you that the next hour will not allow the usual out of doors' exercise: neither would common sense suffer you to break off in the middle of a calculation or puzzling difficulty because the clock had struck, but you may be spared the wearying hesitation that wastes so many hours in an undecided life; and what is of equal benefit, you may avoid getting absorbed in one kind of employment to the neglect of others of the same weight.

It is curious to observe how little our first impressions are to be trusted at the beginning of any sort of occupation; if the taste for novelty does not give an exaggerated notion of its use or pleasantness, the new ground generally offers repulsion: the clumsiness of unaccustomed efforts, the doubt of success, and ignorance of attractions proper to the subject when more familiar, combine to discourage us, to make the dullest work in which we have felt our progress more inviting. If we valorously determine to slay these dismaying lions, we may enter, and possess for life, many a rich land, from which the slothful debar themselves by the application of their favourite opiate, "It is not worth while." Never forget, in all your calculations of what is or is not worth while, that so soon as you

become occupied in anything, be it small or great, that occupation will have an emphasis of interest never to be accurately perceived while you view it in theory, or from the standing point of other kinds of business. And this fact ought to warn you against being over influenced by habit when deciding upon the "what next" of your time. The rule which helps me in many hesitations as to the use of time is this: Let what *must* be done be first attended to, and what may well be done come afterwards in the due order of its esteemed worth. Simple as this law of precedence appears, I believe it would not only form the basis of every day punctuality, but of a noble proportion in the efforts of our internal as well as of our external life: for not only would what *has* to be done by a given time be completed before precipitance gives it every chance of being ill-done, since, "each act is rightliest done, not when it must, but when it may be best;" but the essentials of duty would be secured before its more superficial parts engrossed attention. Acting by this rule, you would be (according to a good old saying) just before you were generous; truly charitable before you allowed your wit to exercise its subtle fascinations; prudent before you gave way to enterprises only warranted by hope;—above all, you would be diligent in serving your Lord before you sought

the pleasures intended for occasional refreshment and not for habitual pursuit.

I may be accused of evading the real difficulty when I take for granted that there is always, or generally, in a young lady's choice of employments the distinctive stamp of even comparative importance; when reading, music, drawing, gardening and the like are all equally possible, which can be called that which must or had better be done, to perform even a shadow of duty? This none but the individual who asks can justly decide, for, as I shall never be weary of repeating, it is to the tastes, and means of cultivating these tastes which are given to us, that I believe we must look for the measure of our responsibility in non-essentials.

But what may be considered a safer test is most commonly supplied by our circumstances, and the affectionate cares they ought to impose: have not all, with a few pitiable exceptions, some whom it is their duty and delight to please? and cannot the wishes of parents, or a brother, or sister, sufficiently direct the indifferent mind to occupations which will increase its power of gratifying them? It is surely one of the sweetest of women's minor duties to take a kindly interest in whatever interests home companions; and in taking the sketch suggested by a

brother perhaps not often apt to notice such trifles; in mastering the difficulties of a long duet, in which a sister may like to join; in reading a book that would look repulsively dry except for the recommendation of a father's praise; or in finishing the dull piece of work which it has fidgetted a notable mother to see so long at a stand-still — the satisfaction of fulfilled duty will be found, and the heart bear pleasant witness to the superior value of things done for the sake of others, compared to those which only please and occupy oneself. For the sake of others, if you have not found them indispensable to yourself, habits of punctuality must be established. Not only are they of use as a check upon the fatal growth of procrastination, — that vice which infatuates the mind with such potent soporifics that the lost opportunity of the day and the gradual ruin of a life are perceived with mere regret, and seldom rouse the will, — but they give to the mind rare powers of concentration, using it to complete change of employment, and to an entire withdrawal of attention from one when the time for another is come.

This thorough command of the faculties is unusual, and some will say impossible, in a womanly mind, because of the hundred little things that

require to be thought of and seen to, by a woman, at a minute's notice. Those who have superintended a household know what wide-spreading and incessant vigilance is necessary, and how often trifling concerns will intersect each hour devoted to those of a seemingly higher character: it is for this very reason that I think it so needful for every woman to gain an ability for quick and complete transfer of thought, for fixed attention on every point to which she directs it, and resolute banishment of those half-thoughts about what has gone before which distract her in the prosecution of present business, and are fruitless with regard to what is past, having neither the calmness of reflection, nor the precision of resolve. It is extremely difficult to prevent this running back of the mind: let me advise, that whenever you detect yourself in wandering towards things previously despatched, while hands or eyes pursue other works, you come to a pause and deliberate, asking yourself "Was this work, this conversation, done and carried on to the best of my power at the time?—if it was not, in what way do I now see failure? how can I learn from it, for future improvement?" And do not dismiss the question till you have satisfied yourself as to all its bearings upon your own conduct; for this is reflection; in thoughts like

these true wisdom may be ripened; and after such thoughts you will pass on to present work with new vigour: but if you find, in looking back, no cause for the wholesome bitters of repentance; if you would speak and act *now*, could the time recur, as you did *then*, surely you may leave it as indeed past. For what avails brooding over that which is now out of your reach, — calculating effects upon others, which you can never estimate aright, — reviewing what no longer belongs to *you*, while the minutes which run by your absent mind are wasted, because *their* purpose and possibilities are but half noticed? If you will consider how much at the mercy of chance interruption a woman's life is likely to be, how probable it is that sickness and sorrow, either of her own or other people's, will occupy large portions of every year, and how exposed she is internally to the tyranny of feeling and imagination, you will allow that it behoves her to learn early the art of directing her thoughts *wisely*, and of controlling every one that seeks to take possession of her mind.

Punctuality is a virtue which I think would be more esteemed, and more generally cherished, if it was borne in mind that it proves the strength of various good qualities, *essential* to a Christian life. Humility, rectitude, self-denial, kindness, and constancy to prin-

ciples have been at work when punctuality is consistently practised; when neither a servant nor a poor person is kept waiting beyond the appointed hour, because "it is *only* keeping them a few minutes longer;" — when the hour strikes which has been agreed upon for some social proceeding, and the individual, deeply interested in his or her occupation, instantly resigns it, because the time is not now for private use, but by right due to the purposes of another; when a page is not turned after the time is come when any one else will be kept waiting; when, rather than disappoint an expectant at a given time and place, personal convenience is cheerfully sacrificed; when, though no one waits, and no direct annoyance is likely to follow a longer indulgence of morning sleep or evening amusements, yet the time for rising and for going to bed is rarely altered, because a rule has been made which it is unadvisable needlessly to infringe.

I do not think it is going too far to say that punctuality is a form of beneficence and self-discipline which has more successful effects than many fresh-made systems that appeal to the love of self-devotion rather than to the sense of an obvious every-day duty: for heroic aspirations (in young hearts especially) are apt to lift us a little off that

*common* ground on which we must find both our work and our encouragement, if we hope to taste a woman's measure of earthly happiness. In early life we are so dissatisfied with men and women as we find them, that it seems easier then to do them good, and make the world a better one, by keeping out of mind what they, and it, really are, and by devising for their benefit plans of great elevation and beauty, but for the most part totally unsuited to human nature. Of course, this makes it peculiarly irksome to be an exact follower of all our associates' minute rules about time and place; yet only try the experiment, dull as it seems; spare your neighbour needless temptations from the daily vexation of being kept waiting, even for ten minutes, uncertain of your regularity and impatient at being chafed by such tiny thwartings. Try, and you will find your presence has not only the sunshine of love, but also an invigorating re-assurance in its quiet influence: your virtue in this particular will be taken for granted when once recognised as a habit, but it will never lose its good effects. For my own part, I feel so strongly on this point, that any one who is *habitually* unpunctual (unless in rare cases of extreme languor, or tyrannical sloth) seems to me to treat the rest of the world with a disregard that is almost

insolent: it seems a practical exposition of the feeling, "I shall not put myself out of my way; I shall come when I am ready, and when I like." Perhaps men generally feel this, and we know that their important affairs and their strength of self-will (too frequently fostered by education to an inordinate degree) offer for them many an excusing plea; but when women have throned their selfishness and do it continual homage, we know not how to apologise for them, and they have the certainty of so much consequent unhappiness, that, except with a hope of rousing them from this paralysis of their best nature, one would be sorry to give them additional pain by the assurance that, in woman, such selfishness is frightfully out of place.

From anything that has been said here, I hope no support will be gathered for that fidgetty narrow-minded observance of times which enslaves the free-will of some who are well-intentioned, and might be wiser. As those who speak highly of neatness do not mean by neatness a restless attention to the position of each class of things in a drawer — a constant restriction of each to the particular space allotted to it — but an unfailing principle of order and propriety, acting in all that is handled and arranged, and, like all other principles, adapting itself to all the peculi-

arities of those things which it actuates, yet being constrained by none; so by punctuality I mean method and exactness applied to time, with an enlightened largeness of view and minuteness of care. Such a principle will only extend our liberties by its apparent fetters; without it we are subject to all the varying impulses of social and internal life,—to whim, caprice, mood, constitutional idleness — hard masters all! for either of these will deprive us of freedom more entirely than the strictest habits of punctuality. And yet with all my respect for this virtue, I allow that it may become a snare: as is the wont of human beings, we quickly forget the *spirit* of the means of good, and, losing sight of their object, blindly adhere to the means.

Now, if I do not mistake, the spirit of punctuality is drawn from the chiefest graces of Christianity, and its object is the welfare of man, and the resulting honour to his Maker; and if, as it sometimes happens, this object is more likely to be attained by a breach of the rules usually observed, — seeing they are but rules of conventional agreement,—it is no doubt more in accordance with their spirit to set them aside; and this you must not neglect to do, from what is often only a foolish obstinacy.

I will not slight your powers of mind by giving

instances of what I mean — cases where this exceptional untimeliness is as clear a duty as in times of illness, great distress of mind, and unavoidable interruptions of daily routine. There are other occasions when it is fully as important to be planless, and yet not so generally recognised as home happiness requires. There is an unswerving tendency to drive on with usual and appointed works which must neutralise much of the good it aims at, since it is powerful in alienating affections, without any of those definite disagreements which warn us when love is receding, and may yet be won back to its proper home.

Beware of this. Beware of an air of pre-occupation: your kindly attention, your gentlest sympathy, is as much the right of those you live with as the punctual appearance at the hour of dinner, walking, and family prayer, of which you would never willingly defraud them. Which is it most likely they will prize? Which is it most your duty to give? Surely these nameless modes of showing kindness are to be reckoned among the "weightier matters"* of spiritual religion of which our Saviour spoke when declaring that they were to be done, and those of less importance not to be left undone? It

* Matthew xxiii. 23.

will be of great service for you to have a disengaged manner when others appeal to you; and yet this hospitality of heart may be carried too far: many feel the surrender of self-originated objects so agreeable and consonant, both to their pliant natures and to their standard of duty, that they gladly suffer their time to be at the disposal of any one but themselves. Do not let *your* precious fields be treated as if they were waste ground; hedge them in from the constant depredations of habitual idlers by habitual industry, and by a quiet promptitude in going from one work to another; for without these precautions you will at last be as helpless as the kind-hearted spendthrift; you will have lavished your time on those who did not need it, and will have no longer the power of devoting it to those who do. It is wonderful how different is the amount of available time in the lives of those who have equal degrees of business: with the unfortunates who have not learned how to use time, there is generally an incessant outcry for leisure, and a very languid prosecution of the work that withholds it from them; for anything not immediately required they hope to find time *some day*, when in truth no day ever comes in which we can find the time we have wasted in slackness of hand and feebleness of purpose, in fruitless talking or divided attention—the

habit of which will strengthen while the term of our years decreases, and the force, that might once have resisted it, declining, suffices for little more than the passion of regret. Oh, if we would have time for true life as well as for passive existence, for harvesting immortal fruits as well as for enduring transitory afflictions, we must win it; we must devote each quick-minuted hour to some good end; we *must* deny ourselves every vain expense of moments, and seek wisdom in their use from Him who knows how soon our probation may end.

In considering this subject, we must not overlook things which frequently baffle every effort for bringing time into a definite shape: the many hours of social life when it is the complaint of those who suffer from them, "that no one knows what is going to be done," and yet all independent pursuits are suspended; and the small affairs which arise unexpectedly in the course of most days, and throw out all calculations as to the length of time that should be given to them. For the first contingency, a woman's work-basket may generally prepare her; if work is impossible, there will be exercise for good humour and patience, which may give spiritual value to the tedious interval. One can seldom be among our fellow-creatures without some opportunity of either receiv-

ing or doing good ; it may be less than a visible deed —a kind word or look, a hint worth taking, or even a silent unexpressed wish,—each, if pure in motive, "virtuous sap," which Coleridge tells us will be accounted as fruit.

For those many little matters which seem to demand such a disproportionate allowance of time, you will need much prudential wisdom. Should you treat them with neglect, as things that can be done at any time, they may become giant annoyances, harassing you at every step with unforeseen consequences; while, if they are dealt with as important items of the day's work, you are likely to contract a petty turn of thought, to be in ridiculous bondage to trifles. The truth is, that these trifles may at any moment become instruments of great effects, yet generally deserve their character of insignificance:—

"Trifles light as air
May prop, as you have known, our nobler being,"*

and an untidy, hasty despatch of trifling business, because it is trifling, has been often singularly revenged in the nice adaptations of human fate to human folly. But by a thorough application of mind to the least details, we may always prepare them for

* Wordsworth.

the possibilities of high service, without ever forgetting their due subordination in the order of things; and I believe we owe more every-day comfort to foresight and thoroughness in trifles than to almost any habit one could name.

If some who read this are more given to an inflamed diligence than to indolent habits, let them weigh all that is expressed by the old French proverb, "Qui trop embrasse, mal étreint." There is usually a degree of covetousness in excessive industry, whatever direction it takes, against which they should guard, and the more carefully that it steals into the heart under many a praiseworthy disguise, and is seldom suspected till it has made the temper impatient and all sympathies of short duration. When a woman has made herself a machine for getting through work, her highest powers of usefulness are in complete abeyance.

The benefit of keeping diaries has been often contested, and a good deal has been fairly said for and against them; I should not therefore presume to prescribe their use unconditionally. Daily records of emotion and thought seem to be dangerous on many accounts, but a regular journal of all that is done is, in my opinion, of great service both for the year that passes and in retrospect.

## CHAP. VII.

"Every action we do is not in an immediate order to eternal blessings or infelicity, but yet mediately, and by consequence, and in the whole disposition of affairs, it adds great moments to it."—*Jeremy Taylor.*

"What we should desire to do, the conscience alone will inform us, but how and when we are to make the attempt, and to what extent it is in our power to accomplish it, are questions for the judgment, and require an acquaintance with facts and their bearings on each other. Thence the improvement of our judgment, and the increase of our knowledge on all subjects included within our sphere of action, are not merely advantages recommended by prudence, but absolute duties imposed on us by conscience."—*Coleridge, The Friend*, vol. ii. p. 171.

It is to the dictates of conscience that the disturbed mind will most confidently appeal, even when it seeks to act contrary to reason and to the implied will of God: it is not possible that such contradiction should exist; and yet in some unhappy cases irreconcilable differences are apprehended, and conscience seems to forbid what reason commands and the Bible fully warrants. I trust this form of error is *very* rare; but if it gains ground in early life, the chances of complete cure are so small, and the results sometimes so terrible, that I may be pardoned for *endeavouring*

to combat in its earliest stages what afterwards may prove unapproachable — a disease beyond the reach of human remedies or human sympathy, sadder than the tenderest pity can believe, and hopeless on this side of the grave. It may happen that one of my readers, in a time of disquiet and aimlessness, meets with a passage like this: "I feel much for young people; they are constantly looking for happiness; their hearts continually cry 'give, give!' they must have an object, and they will be continually changing one object for another till the consolation of Israel becomes their consolation." These are true words of Cecil's, and they reach the heart, which echoes "That is just my case! how vainly *I* have tried one plan after another, lifting up a new hope as soon as the last began to waver; listening to all sorts of advice about means of happiness; wasting my life in things that do not profit. Could I but give myself wholly to the service of God, I might know peace." And can error lurk in thoughts like these? Even so. This impulse to strive for more entire devotion is a thing to be very thankful for, but so sudden a contempt of the past condition of your soul is not always safe, for it is not always based on truth. Supposing that you have been religiously brought up, and serious in the re-

newal and in the effort to perform baptismal vows, you *have* had this great and only sufficing object: that it has not been your full consolation does not necessarily prove that the heart has bent its longing *only* towards perishable goods; too clear it is that it has gone astray continually, but not that it has lost sight of its true need.

You are still young, and the peace that passeth understanding, which is indeed consolation, is the high reward of a mature piety: you may have it now in great measure, but I believe I shall not mislead you by asserting that it must often be eclipsed for awhile in the earlier periods of a Christian life. I would not chill one holy aspiration by pointing out (as bearing *figuratively* on the subject) St. Paul's expression, "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual;" only I would have you very cautious of misjudging your eligibility for the spiritual character of the last from the strong development of what is peculiar to its predecessor. Nay, more, I would venture to anticipate riper proficiency in Christian virtues hereafter, from the slowness you now feel to claim them as a present possession.

I believe, with Coleridge, that it would be a sorry proof of humility were you to ask for "angel's wings

to overfly your human nature;" and this in fact you will do, if, before you have had time to know what the spirit within you is, you expect a complete conquest over it. There is a simplifying of difficulties in such a passage as the one just quoted particularly welcome to an uncertain mind; it seems to proclaim silence to the many motives which are striving for mastery; it promises a direct path, a single and all-absorbing desire. Take it in its right sense, and these promises will be fulfilled, for they are but a reminder of our Saviour's gracious words, "Come unto me," and "I will give you rest." But, believe me, you may foolishly misunderstand the merciful invitation if you think to follow Him more closely, to attain His offered rest more speedily by a precipitate abnegation of all the lesser goods that human nature prompts you to seek, and Divine mercy delights to give. Those who can believe that religion requires this, forget surely that man's nature is of older date than its corruption. "Nature"—said Jacob Behmen, for once speaking intelligibly to every mind—"Nature is not come into man for the sake of sinne, why should it then fall away for the sake of the regeneration?" They must fail to observe the numberless places in Holy Writ where sanction is given to its most common inclinations, while their *undue*

gratification is as solemnly reproved, as that which is wholly forbidden. One would think they must imagine that they better understand the way which leads to our heavenly inheritance than He who has called us thither, since they seem to expect more growth in grace from a state of being rarely possible in earth, than from humble compliance with all the little cares, and little pleasures strewn so thickly in that state of life to which most of us are called. From many who entertain opinions of this kind, you will hear persuasive arguments of self-denial in the abstract: and so much truth lies in all that may be said of its necessity and manifold good effects, that you may be led insensibly to attach an unsafe, *because* a disproportionate value, to this branch of duty and with the "soif immense de perfectionnement," "de morale, et de vérité," proper to your age, you will be inclined to think it cannot be exercised too frequently. I venture to say that it can, and manifestly to the hindrance of other duties.* If the mysterious union of body and spirit, with all the complicated impulses that move it, was deprived of a free-will; if the perfect law of Christ was not a law of liberty; if the buried talent could satisfy the demands of our

* "Good impulses and actions must have their limits, in order that they may not impede other good impulses and actions."—*Lavater.*

Lord — then might we maim our being, and trample out every natural instinct, to prove the sincerity of our faith, the entireness of our devotion; but God forbid that reasonable creatures who give thanks for *redemption* should think that with such sacrifice He is well pleased.

Though we sin continually, and have ever cause to tremble before Him, as before a most just and holy judge, yet He is still our *Maker*, and to serve Him with a perverted nature, is only to dishonour His wisdom and slight His love. There is great probability that a young heart, when first impressed with the solemn interests of eternity, would think erroneously about self-denial; there is a just sense of the need of personal holiness, which no rejoicing in the sufficiency of the only Atonement can obscure; but at the same time the ignorance of self is then so blinding, that its most dangerous tendencies are often overlooked, while some, innocent and advantageous, are suspected and attacked with all the vehemence of unbalanced zeal. Perhaps none can know what are the absolute requirements of true religion, and how hard it is to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, till many years of trial have revealed the secret wells of sin, the incurable plague of the heart; and until then it

is very natural for a conscientious mind to impose upon itself harassing and unadvisable restrictions. And the danger of these is great, because of our liability to transfer notions of right and wrong from essentials to things of no comparative importance. It is too often notorious that the scruples which have withheld people from harmless actions, do not disturb them when a conscience rightly informed would give instant alarm. Many doubts as to whether it is right to indulge in a social amusement, have sometimes appeared to deaden every perception of the real sinfulness of censorious judgments and peevish complaint; for we cannot habitually oppose the common sense of nature, without falling into grievous inconsistencies, and thereby causing unmerited suspicion to fall on the caution of true piety.

As an example of the scruples to which I object, let me take those which touch upon mental pursuits: their engrossing interest, and the keen delight they give, may account for the fears of many as to their influence on spiritual life. Now no human being may dare to deny the danger of idolatry in any form recommending itself to the human heart; and intellect has fascinations that can beguile and occupy it, filling all the scanty foreground of eternity with trifles, whose grave semblance can deceive, and

*almost* simulate reflections of the "light of life:" thus leading step by step, over smooth ways, to the ruin of the spirit. Well aware of this, I am still persuaded that it is our bounden duty to cultivate every power of mind which we possess, to its utmost perfection; I am convinced that reason and revelation alike warrant Dante's "Non stringer ma rallarga ogni vigore;" and I will give several reasons for this conviction, which may lack evident coherence, because I only choose the strongest among many on which it is grounded. It would try your patience too severely, if I urged in its defence all that experience suggests. In the first place, it should be remembered that powers of mind and spirit are not so distinct as to allow us to weaken the one by disuse, without doing injury to the other; the hours which day after day are devoted to careful reading on secular subjects may appear to you withdrawn from higher avocations, from prayer, and meditation, and religious reading, but be assured they will give a vigour and concentration of force to the spirit, which will materially help to advance it when engaged in more sublime exercise. While the secrets of antagonism* are unsuspected, it will hardly be be-

* "Excellence of all kinds, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, is the product, not of the single operation of some one principle, but of

lieved how much devotion is quickened by an entire surrender of the mind to temporal business, in its due time and place; and what proportion of time we should give to this, is, I think, intimated by the Fourth Commandment, which conveys to my apprehension as clear an injunction to *do all that we have to do*, as to rest from doings on the appointed Sabbath, and keep it holy. I cannot express what I believe to be wisdom on this point, as well as I find it given in a sermon of Dr. Hook's, "on promoting the glory of God;" from which I take the following passage:—"Man approximates to perfection in proportion as he acts in accordance with the constitution of his nature, not by counteracting his internal principles, or by vainly attempting to eradicate his appetite, affections, and desire, but by preserving their right proportion and mutual relations; by bringing them into harmonious co-operation, and by reducing them all under the dominion of conscience, of reason, of revelation, and of grace. Man is a sensitive being, an intellectual being, a moral being; by his senses, his reason, and his conscience, properly regulated, he is to be impelled to immediate action. Thus the very fact of our constitution im-

the opposing forces of two or more powers, which have a natural fitness to counteract each other."—*Isaac Taylor.*

plies the occasional and not unfrequent quiescence of our leading principle, since these motives would cease to exist, unless resting on their respective objects, as ends in themselves. The very nature of a motive power would be changed by the interposition of some other object of contemplation besides that to which it immediately impels us." The whole sermon will be useful to any to whom the text, 1 Corinthians, chap. x., verse 31., presents practical difficulties. Again, the suppression of intellectual tastes seems to me the proof of an erroneous notion, that grace is a *substitute*, more than an aid to powers originally given; but as we call God's providence overruling, and yet find, with rare exceptions, an unbroken chain of natural cause and effect in all that befalls us, so I suppose the influence of the Holy Spirit is indeed prevailing and supernatural, and yet working in and by the faculties of man,—a supposition which, in my opinion, consecrates every effort made to enlarge their scope. Another cause for these efforts, I find in the weapons thus supplied for purposes of social good, believing with South, not only that "Religion placed in a soul of exquisite knowledge and abilities, as in a castle, finds not only habitation, but defence," but also, as he says again, "Religion in a great measure stands or falls, accord-

ing to the abilities of those that assert it." It greatly concerns us, when devoting our hearts to the service of God, to avoid all *un*necessary separation from our fellow-men; and I believe we should cherish all common interests, all innocent feelings that may give us the unalienable right of sympathy to speak boldly when obliged to differ on points of duty; for if in taking a higher ground we forget or ignore the snares and impediments which beset those who cling to the world, there will be small probability of our helping in any degree to raise the standard.

But, alas! how often from what *seems* higher ground, there are, in early life, declensions which endanger faith! If you have known them by your own experience, you know that ardour of emotion may support you awhile under the hardships of self-imposed discipline; that there may be a temporary peace within from entire resignation of all minor interests; a sanguine zeal which would make the Christian's course a life-long triumph if it would last. Humanly speaking, it is impossible that it should; the violent impetus exhausts itself; there is an ebb-tide — a weariness of spirit — a dreaded suspicion that the service of God does *not* involve the subversion of all that is natural to man; and

then follows a mistrustful dislike of *all* that has been associated with error. This is a time of peril, for it is invariably true, that "jeder Ueberspannung folgt früher oder später Erschlaffung,"* and slumber after such over-excitement as this may be heavy from the additional narcotics of sin: a fatal languor may overcome you then. The subject is too solemn for mere advice; I would entreat any who feel themselves in this crisis to *persist* in earnest prayer — not long, but frequent and unstudied prayer, not for the rekindling of devout raptures, but for wisdom, and humility, and the sound mind which can confess error, and seek to rectify it. I would also recommend a careful revision of all the simplest duties that religion prescribes, and an honest review of personal conduct with regard to them, particularly to the unalterable duty of thankfulness and rejoicing, too often lost sight of because it seems so easy, and likely to come of its own accord when others are performed, whereas few things are more neglected, even by sincere Christians. Even on these points I strongly advise you to limit your meditations to a given time; this at an end, to dis-

* Everything overstrained is sooner or later followed by relaxation. — *Zschokke.*

miss them utterly while you engage the mind in any business that will fully occupy it. For the time you are so far sick-hearted, that if you will be my patient you must submit to a strict regimen; avoid much solitude, *all* books on religious subjects except the Bible, do everything you can in actively assisting other people, and take advantage of any possible change, either of society, or employment, or scene. Try also to cultivate a childlike pleasure in little things, and do not distress yourself because you now spend in drawing, or music, or idle wandering in the sunshine, time that a year ago you loved to pass in prayer and holy meditations. Do not think yourself exiled from the love of God because now the heart seems too cold and dead to respond to its never failing manifestations. Perhaps, in your present state, gratitude to Him can be better proved by meek submission than by frequent worship; for it is not only by words that the spirit of man speaks to its Maker. By His blessing the prudential measures here proposed may be successful, and spiritual energies may gradually be re-inforced, and I believe that a purer and more calm piety is often rooted in those who patiently overlive the check which succeeds to morbid excitement.

There are cases still more pitiable than this just described, where there seems to be a life-long divorce of reason and conscience, — the one inciting to action, the other perpetually forbidding it, making doubt to hang upon every word or deed, and a fearful weight of condemnation to attend every innocent impulse; but this I imagine to be so clearly the result of disease, that argument *then* would be worse than wasted. While still health of mind remains to you, endeavour to fortify your reason and enlighten your conscience, for very terrible and mysterious are the penalties for neglecting either obligation. You will find abundant opportunities for self-denial in the repression of sin — positive and indisputable — in thought, word, and deed; but be slow, I beseech you, to fetter yourself with needless restraints, for in subjecting yourself to petty thwartings in things both lawful and expedient, you may *incalculably* weaken the repressive force of divine commands, while you sour the temper and grievously impair the judgment. It is, I suppose, instinctive in a creature mind to look upon forbidding measures as the best means of amelioration, *repression* being all the finite mind can secure; only the Creator can oppose to evil a good impulse, can cause what he enjoins; can make love

to take the place of hate, hope of despondency, and the like: let us never trust to the negation of hurtful things as our main instrument of good, but be earnest in prayer for the quickening influences of the Spirit. Of the many ways in which we must practise self-denial, few are so important as the denial of that faithless sloth which makes us expect little, ask faintly, and with a divided mind.

By the number of my quotations, you may have detected that I felt wholly unequal to the momentous subject of this chapter, and that I was longing to throw the responsibility of counsel upon those who could give it with more authoritative wisdom: it is for this reason that I add several passages likely to touch minds unsettled by scruples, with a serviceable plainness of speech. As they are taken from a book which probably few women would care to read through, I give them at length, and not only by references to chapter and page, from Abraham Tucker's "Light of Nature pursued."

The facility of skipping them will occur to all whom they do not concern, while they deserve the serious attention of those whom they, in any degree, interest.

"A right faith is compatible with the common business and transactions of life, therefore it is a

spurious piety that makes men desirous to lay out their whole time in exercises of devotion. Whoever possesses just notions of God, must believe He orders all things in perfect wisdom: since, then, He in His providence has placed us in a situation that renders an attention necessary to our bodily wants, our worldly concerns, the conveniences and even the pleasures of our fellow-creatures, we may show our obedience in performing these little offices with innocence and propriety, as well as the higher duties and acts of religion. For we are servants, whose business it is to fulfil the task before us; we must not expect always to be employed in attendance upon our Master's person, nor ought we to esteem *any* work unprofitable or trifling which the circumstances we are placed in require us to execute." "For our activity will never be useless to us if rightly applied, even in the smallest matters when nothing better is within our reach; and as men shall give account for every idle (that is, every intemperate word or thought), so every right action, word or thought, however trivial, yet if best suited to the present occasion, shall be placed to the credit of their account. Hence we may gather a constant self-satisfaction in all our motions, our very recreations will afford a sincere delight; our worldly

professions, our worldly cares, the daily transactions of life, will not appear loss of time, nor avocations at variance with our principal work. For the same God, being Maker of all worlds visible and invisible, has constructed each in every particular, so as to answer the purposes of the rest, therefore we are to esteem nothing trivial and unavailing that befalls in His laws of nature and courses of providence; and may believe that every right action which the present occasion calls for, is the work we are called upon of God to perform; and though it does not make so large strides as arduous exercises of virtue, yet advances us something forward towards our final goal." * * * * * "Despondencies of this kind are often owing to the indiscretion of teachers, who insist too strenuously upon higher perfections of virtue than human nature can attain, and are found to prevail most upon women, or persons of small ability, and in their contemplative hours more than in seasons of action. For the consolation of such persons let it be observed, that righteousness does not consist in the quantity of good we do, but in our doing so much, be it little or be it much, as lies in our power. There are pegs and pins in a building as well as beams and columns, nor can we doubt that God distributes to every man the

talents suited to the task he is to perform; therefore if we attend only to family affairs, or making broth for the sick, provided this be all we have ability to do, we have completed our part. Let it next be remarked, that our imagination does not lie under our absolute command to raise ideas there, in what strength or vividness of colour we please; the poet cannot always fill himself with inspiration, nor the philosopher with his clear discernment of truth, nor the religious man with his ardours and transports; therefore the want of a fervent faith and glowing zeal is not so much the mark of reprobation as of a present indisposition of the organs. Let it further be remarked, that notwithstanding what may have been inculcated of a constant attention to the duties of religion, our business lies chiefly in action, and the common duties of life; so that when perplexities overcloud us, instead of foreboding melancholy omens from the gloom they cast, we should rather take them as admonitions that it is not now the season to puzzle our brains with thinking, but to bestir ourselves in some active employment, or pursue some innocent recreation, which may supply us with a glow of spirits for reason to work with to better purpose afterwards. For if fear and trembling be a duty, a becoming confidence and just

repose in the Divine Goodness is a duty likewise; — nor is fortitude less a virtue than prudence, and the proper province of both is ascertained by their usefulness. Therefore, when anxieties arise, it behoves us to consider what purpose they may answer; while they serve to keep us vigilant and spur on our activity in helping ourselves, we do well to encourage them, but when they tend to no good, nor urge us to anything we should not have done as well without them, we cannot do better than turn our face from them, and use any expedient at hand to banish them out of our thoughts." * * * * * "But let us not suffer the desire of holiness to carry us beyond the bounds of discretion, nor mislead us in judging wherein its essence consists, — an error that men of no small credit among the multitude have fallen into. For they, observing justly that study, meditation, prayer, thanksgiving, and the externals of religion, are the main supports of holiness, place the whole of it in them; so they would have men think of nothing else, but employ every day and every hour in a continual round of these exercises. Whereas holiness does not consist in them, but in the disposition of mind to be contracted by them, which disposition is better forwarded by the life and spirit of our

devotions, than by the length and frequency of them. For it is not in human nature to keep up a glow of fervency further than to a certain period, *according to the strength and condition of our organs*, all beyond is perfunctory and unavailing form, no more a nourishment of the mind, than eating beyond one's appetite is to the nourishment of the body. Besides that, the practice of a rational and useful life is equally, if not more necessary to strengthen our sentiments, for obedience is better than sacrifice, and infixes the principle whereon it was performed deeper than any mental efforts can do. Nor would it be more absurd for a soldier to desert his post that he may lie lurking about his general's tent, lest he should lose sight of his reverence, than for us to neglect our active duties, that we may attend more closely to those of devotion."

"We have offered reasons to make it probable that the blessed spirits above do not spend their whole time in Hallelujahs, but are continually employed on high behests, to assist in administering the courses of nature and fortune. And God has placed us under a necessity of attending to servile objects for the support and convenience of ourselves and our fellow-creatures. Let us then, in all our measures, have a respect to their use, and practise

religious exercises so far as they tend to give us a happy turn of mind, dependent on Providence, contented with its dispensations, and pleased with being under its protection, and make us industrious within our narrow sphere of action to maintain the order and promote the happiness of the world wherewith we stand connected." *

* Tucker's "Light of Nature pursued."

## CHAP. VIII.

"But the clear soul, by virtue purified,
Collecting her own strength, from the foul steam
Of earthly life, is often dignified
With that pure pleasure, that from God doth stream:
Often 's enlightened by the radiant beam
That issues forth from His Divinity;
Then feelingly immortal she doth deem
Herself, conjoin'd by so near unity
With God, and nothing doubts of her eternity."

HENRY MORE.

IT must ever be remembered that no system, however wise, no degree of piety, no favourable circumstances, can secure to us continual happiness on earth; and it will be well to examine deliberately those suffering conditions of life which most frequently embitter it. I will name ill-health first, both because it is so often inevitable, and because you will sometimes hear it said that without health, happiness is scarcely possible. The happiness most open to human notice, and most dearly prized by human nature, is indeed impossible when weakness and pain are to be borne day after day, through lifelong sickliness; yet I

am sure more may be done than is often attempted to make a painful state of body not only calm, but bright with a spiritual triumph. While oppressed by the dispiriting influences of sickness, its languors, and disgusts, and humiliations, it is difficult to believe in the spirit's real independence of the body, or rather its separation from the evils which afflict its earthly associate. But listen to the serene conclusion of Bishop Butler on this subject: "These systems of matter not being ourselves," * * * "the relation a person bears to those parts of his body to which he is most nearly related, what does it amount to but this, that the living agent and those parts of the body mutually affect each other?" "And the same thing in kind, though not in degree, may be said of all foreign matter which gives us ideas, and which we have any power over."*

You will perhaps say that when Butler made this statement, he was free from headache, toothache, or any unremitting pain, and object that over it we have no power: none for its removal, but for neutralising its effects upon the mind, you know not how much.

Of the influence of the body upon the mind we are constantly hearing; we need to be reminded of

* Butler's "Analogy," part i. chap. i.

the influence of the spirit upon the body; not so evident, perhaps, nor so common, but incontestable; cases not unfrequently occur in which the weakest frame appears to borrow a surprising accession of vigour from the indomitable strength of its undying companion: and if by degrees suffering saps the force of the mind, it is no less a fact that *its* energy often seems to support and prolong the trembling life of the body, carrying it through dangers which threatened immediate dissolution. In calm moments this supremacy of the spirit may not be disputed, but the temptation to doubt, or to forget it, is sorely pressed upon a weary soul to whom all external things come through a darkened and distorting medium: overwhelmed with the mournful consequences of disease, it is ready to lift up a reproach to heaven, to cry out in bitterness, "Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me." *

Full of anguish, "anguish of all sizes," is the process by which our clay houses are undermined and brought to ruin; and sometimes mental power gives us a keener appreciation of bodily ills: we sigh with an ever growing perception of the enormous

* Job x. v. 8.

disadvantages (for this life) under which the deformed or disabled body labours; seeing the loveliness of health, the perfect adaptation of the symetrical and vigorous body to all the needs and blessings of temporal existence, and the mind returning to consider its own uneasy tenement, its own incapacity and deprivation, feels sometimes a shrinking from its doom that amounts to horror, if submission to the will of God is not habitual, and to melancholy diffidence even when prolonged trial, meekly borne, has elicited the heartfelt "It is well" of assured faith. *It is well.* It is the Lord's doing that disease remains unchecked by all our care, and all the skill of human physicians. But for His willing it not to be, you who now pine away from year to year, sick in body and sinking in strength, might be giving Him glad praise for healing every infirmity, for enabling you to serve Him with new powers. Do not forget that any moment this might be, if the purposes for which you are thus chastened were answered. Beyond cherishing this comfortable conviction, and patiently using all the remedies prudence and science can suggest, we have nothing to do with what might be; *what is*, whether woe or healing, is our concern; and I entreat any whose heart and strength fail in the slow fires of disease, to believe that to them, as well

as to happier seeming mortals, the "Fear not," "Be of good cheer," "Rejoice in the Lord," of Scripture are *equally* applicable. We are never told in the Bible to do or to feel what is impossible, and though affliction cannot but be grievous, our duty remains the same; we must still *rejoice* in the Lord.

The poison of death that riots in flesh and blood will cruelly affect the imprisoned spirit, and we are not to blame ourselves too severely if it often darkens hope and chills good feeling; but by God's grace we may be more than conquerors over this and all other opposition of evil, so long as He allows us the exercise of reason.

These strokes of a Father's rod are not only penal, but curative; we have therefore good cause to rejoice, to suffer with a resignation almost as exulting as the gratitude felt for evident blessings. Let the love of God, as well as His promises, "be accounted most assured to thee, and though thy heart saith clearly no, yet be not thou dissuaded from it."*

Every human body is sown in dishonour, and who can feel the depths of its earthly dishonour as those do whose bodies are for life representatives of pain and feebleness?

* Jacob Behmen.

But because this stage of corporeal being comes first, and seems now so long in passing, shall we forget how transient it is compared to that other to which it will be raised in power? *Now*, it may be, the perfection of the natural world around us smites the heart with a miserable sense of contrast, and even a little bird singing on a branch flooded with evening sunshine, may appear, from your weary bed, to enjoy superior blessings; but do not you see on reflection that your present degradation, your helpless servitude to the infirmity of the flesh, is the very means by which the sublime force of your spirit — your true self — is to be manifested? And can you want higher encouragement than the hope that *your* sickness also may be for the glory of God?

For practical advice under this severe trial you will be at no loss: one who drank deep of the mysterious cup of pain, has left us, in her most consoling book upon Sickness *, a valuable compendium of all that can, I think, be said about it. In reading this admirable book, I feel that the writer had sought and obtained success in the art of consolation from the God of all comfort, and I know that she could

* "Sickness, its Trials and Blessings," published by Francis and John Rivington. London.

speak of Him from experience in St. Paul's words, as of the God "who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

The sufferer from positive illness has perhaps no such need of firm patience as the ever-ailing invalid, —always well enough to encounter the little storms of common life, and seldom sufficiently strong to get through one day without a depressing sense of being unequal to both its troubles and its pleasures. With such patients life drags on heavily, and it must be a brave spirit that does not often feel faint-hearted, when anticipating a repetition of the same efforts, the same languid enjoyments throughout the rest of its earthly course: others can think of the future with joy, or hope, or vivid fear; for the weakly the present is often too full of difficulties to allow their hearts any horizon more distant than the much needed repose of night. And, as is often the case, human pity is apt to fail as people become more and more pitiable; it naturally becomes more of an habitual formula of past, than a tender proof of present feeling, and all around get so used to our weakness that they are half inclined to wonder that we seem suddenly dejected by it now and then. But

while we creep through these monotonous trials we will remember that it is not so with Him who made us. He knows how much more crushing is the trifling pain of to-day which reminds us of having endured the same years ago (when it was new, and the pity it excited fresh) and which promises to be still with us, if we live ten or twenty years longer, than the sharper seizure for which there is speedy remedy. Let us think of His unabating pity; His merciful listening to our weary sighs, and like the Israelites when they heard that the Lord had looked on their affliction, we shall bow our heads, and worship with softened grief and deeper humility.

## CHAP. IX.

" Every present holds a future in it,
Could we read its bosom secret right;
Could we see the golden clue and win it,
Lay our hand to work with heart and might.

* * * * * *

Each single struggle hath its far vibration,
Working results that work results again;
Failure and death are no annihilation,
Our tears absorbed will make some future rain.

Let us toil on; the work we leave behind us,
Though incomplete, God's hand will yet embalm,
And use it some way: and the news will find us
In Heaven above in sweet and endless calm."—ANON.

*From "Household Words."*

AMONG things that seem to annihilate happiness I have put illness of body before dejection of spirit, only because it is commonly a more lasting evil, and the cause of many different kinds of distress; but when bodily ailments are not attended by any great indisposition of mind, they are beyond comparison less grievous than what we call, for want of a better name, low spirits. And is any kind of low spirits so utterly miserable as that which frequently settles

upon the young and eager heart, with a dull weight of languor? making it feel,

" Sans regrets, sans espoir, avancer dans la vie,
Comme un vaisseau qui dort, sur une onde assoupie,
Sentir son âme usée en impuissant effort,
Se ronger lentement sous la souille du sort;
Penser sans découvrir, aspirer sans atteindre,
Briller sans éclairer, et palir sans s'éteindre."—*Jocelyn.*

With the sad conviction,

" Hélas! tel est mon sort et celui des humains,
Nos pères ont passés par les mêmes chemins."

Yes! and have uttered in many languages the same mournful cry of hearts, drooping at the entrance of their worldly career, hungering for they know not what; longing for death, because the life within and without seemed stagnation.* Believe me, many can say,

" Io conducea l' Aprile
Degli anni miei così."

Many think of it as a "dreadful past." You will

* " Recht instinctartig lechzt' ich nach anderer Luft und Umgebung; nach gewaltsamer Bewegung und Zerstreuung. Das todte Einerlei der Lage drückte mich zu Boden.

" Ich hätte aus mir selber herausfliegen mögen, lebensatt. Doch war das nur ein dunkles dumpfes Sehnen und Suchen; ich verstand mich selbst nicht."—*Zschokke's* " *Selbstschau.*"

Instinctively I languished for another atmosphere and neighbourhood; for more powerful impulse and distractions. The dead uniformity of circumstances pressed me to the ground. I would fain have fled out of myself, life weary, yet it was only an obscure, dull, longing and passion; I did not understand myself.

have no want of human sympathy here; sympathy in the abstract, and a few years hence; present complaints may oftener be met with surprise, friendly rebuke for discontent, and the like; for the life which appears to you so lifeless has often quite another aspect to those who have lived longer.

In this instance, as in almost every other, we must slay our own giants, before our struggles are even suspected; we must wrestle with them quite unassisted by man, and with no witness of our valour but the God who will abundantly reward it. Let us try and take the measure of this "Giant Despair." I have bent under the numbing force of his continuous blows; I have wept hopelessly, believing myself his captive for life, and I have been gradually released from his fetters. May God give me power to loosen some of those which bind you!

And first a word to any one who may be inclined by happier experience to think these expressions exaggerated; be thankful if you can think them so, for if you do so sincerely, it proves a most blessed ignorance of this form of suffering; but lest ignorance should make you presumptuous in judgment, know as a fact that very many have spent weeks and months in such abject poverty of joy and interest, that they have been tempted to say, with the hero

of Joseph Downes, in his simpler and more visible poverty,

> " Hail every spirit-stirring curse,
> The arousing hurricanes of Breath,
> Before this pestilent stagnation —
> This creeping of destruction — worse
> Than Ruin's worst wild desolation ! "
>
> *The Proud Shepherd's Tragedy.*

So entirely has the mind become unnaturalised by habitual joyfulness, that a gloomy pleasure has actually been felt in anticipating the saddest means of change, such as a wide spreading epidemic, loss of sight, or limb. Too well had Downes learned this dismal page in human nature, and though the want he speaks of is want in its most common form, what he says is no less true of the want of the spirit:

> " Who cries, ' Good Lord deliver us ! '
> From those — to want delivered up
> Already — (those that are to this
> But as Life's darker extasies ! ). "

Alas! where life is a " vapid cup " it is sometimes " worse than bitter."

But to such as are now ready to call it so, — one of those " swift souls that yearn for light," who seem destined to be " buried in the tomb of sluggish circumstances," — I answer, your misery is curable, and though I can honestly affirm that there is no exaggeration in my description of what may thus be

suffered, I am as sure, that in these sufferings there is great exaggeration of what need be borne. The sickly soul finds sorrow where none need be, and life must be accepted on terms quite different from those which young people expect. The

> "Longing a healthy heart hath in it,
> To feel intensely Life's each minute," *

is natural at your age, but out of all proportion with what this life can do to satisfy it, for strong emotions and vivid enjoyments are not ever of every day occurrence. The greatest part of most lives must be passed in unimpressive routine, in occupations often flat and dull enough for the pitying notice of those who live in pursuit of excitement, yet not necessarily unhappy or profitless. When "the humour of being prodigiously delighted has once taken hold of the imagination," says Paley, "it hinders us from providing for or acquiescing in those gently soothing engagements, the due variety and succession of which are the only things that supply a vein or continued stream of happiness." Perhaps you will answer that it is not dulness of occupation that you complain of, nor the want of exciting pleasures, but that your whole being craves the natural refreshment of society: that in the airless confinement of a secluded life your best faculties languish

* J. Downes.

for want of exercise; that your life is as a buried plant, blanched and feeble for want of common sunshine.

Alas! the want of it is common too. Many noble minds have mourned for the scope they were deprived of by seclusion, and suffered acutely from the deprivation! But the noblest, with "a wise and industrious suffering, which draweth and contriveth use and advantage out of that which seemeth adverse or contrary,"* have reconciled themselves to temporary inaction, as the means God has chosen for their perfecting, and with the hope of "long eternity" before them, have ceased to chafe at a few years' seeming lethargy: seeming only, for in all circumstances, however repressive, some spiritual progress is open to us. But perhaps such calmness of faith cannot be attained while the measure of our powers is still unknown, and our position with regard to our fellow-creatures untried.

There is then a restless thirst for action which the regular succession of petty events in an unvaried circle cannot appease, and an employment or range of circumstances that contents us well enough for a time, takes suddenly an oppressive and disgusting appearance when presented to the imagination as what will have unlimited continuance. Much of our impatience at such a prospect arises from the belief that

* Bacon.

our own vitality is being gradually diminished by the cold apathetic atmosphere in which we fret away the burdensome hours of unprized existence: a mistake, as it is a condition which at an early age concentrates and intensifies every peculiarity of individual character.* You have more reason to fear a habit of antagonism, than any that could assimilate your feelings to surrounding stupor.

Do you ask why are other minds so contented with it? Because circumstances which you now think intolerably dull, may be in after life, when the heart is tamed, a source of sincerest gratitude; but when I say this, I give to yours a new contribution of melancholy, making it, as you say, a condition of contentment to be tamed down, to be dulled and broken, till dulness and hopelessness are the only elements in which we can exist. There is some truth in this assertion, and you cannot yet see all that will neutralise its painfulness; when you have known the storms of

* "In Tiefen unberühret
Wächst einsam das Metall;
Wo's nachtet und gefrieret,
Sich bildet der Krystall."—*J. Kerner.*

In undisturbed depths below
To massive weight the metals grow;
In realms of darkness and of cold,
The crystal takes its perfect mould.

passion, the rack of perplexity while a life of wretchedness or of peace depends on your own decision, or some of the myriad forms of sorrow that invade nearly every household with which you are familiar; then, and not till then you will understand that being tamed is not a lowering process, though it quiets the pulse, nor a sad result though it makes strong earthly hope appear a childish toy, but a firm and peaceful conviction that a life of probation must often be one of suffering, active or passive; that long intervals of time unmarked by external colouring are the inevitable portion of *all*, and that in all the wearinesses, conflicts, and pangs allotted to us here, is "the life of the spirit." If you believe this now by faith, will you allow yourself to be overpowered by the deadness of outer life? You are tempted to loathe even its least details, to regard the chairs and tables and walls on which your listless eye gazes so long, as fellow conspirators with fate, as the furniture of a prison: you are perhaps sunken so low that to sit over the fire hugging hands or knees, or to find in the hours for eating a pleasurable distraction, is the most lively enjoyment of your day. Can you in this deplorable state of mind, heartily thank God for your creation? You *cannot*, while you feel a detached, aimless, baffled creature. The remembrance of the many dreamy

hours I have passed, gazing vacantly at unmoving fields of gray cloud, my own thoughts all as lightless and vague; and of the sickening with which I have turned from the unanswering sky to an earth which seemed even more barren and joyless than it, urges me to rouse you if possible from this torpor, to excite you to find what is your aim*, your unalienable inheritance of natural ability.

However much you may be shackled by external hindrances, in your own nature you may still find resource; to nearly all of us powers are given, in the

* " Derjenige, welcher keine Beschäftigung hat, der er sich mit treuem Eifer hingibt, Der, welcher diese nicht so wie sich selbst und alle Menschen liebt, der hat den sichern Grund nicht gefunden auf dem das Christenthum auch hier Früchte hervorbringt. Eine solche Beschäftigung wird zu einem stillen Tempel eingeweiht, in welchen der Heiland in jeder Stunde der Mühseligkeit seinen Segen ergiesst; sie verbindet uns mit allen andern Menschen, so dass wir an ihren Gefühlen Theil nehmen, und all unser Thun und Lassen zu ihrem Nutzen wirksam werden kann; sie lehrt uns unsern eignen beschränkten Zustand und der Werth Anderer richtig erwägen, und ist des wirksamen Christenthums wahrer, stiller, und frucht-tragender Grund." — *Steffen.*

He who has no occupation to which he gives himself with true zeal, he who does not love this as he loves himself and his fellow men, has not found the sure ground on which Christianity brings forth fruit even here. Such an occupation becomes consecrated as a quiet temple in which the Saviour, during every hour of toil, pours out His blessing; it unites us with all other men, so that we can share their feelings, and make all our conduct efficient for their good; it teaches us rightly to consider our own limited condition and the value of others, and is the true, calm, and fruitful basis of active Christianity.

healthy development of which the most unfortunately circumstanced would find an object and a joy. "Each man has his own vocation. The talent is the call. There is one direction in which all space is open to him — he has faculties silently inviting him thither to endless exertion. He is like a ship in a river — he runs against obstructions on every side but one; on that side all obstruction is taken away, and he sweeps serenely over a deepening channel into an infinite sea."* This is equally true with regard to the especial vocation of women, though it is often of an order too humble for general recognition.

But it may be that your dejection is more from slothfulness than from actual discontent, for we are often unhappy and desponding more because we do not take the trouble to feel otherwise than from any real sorrow; and because we allow the little annoyances we must ever meet with to outweigh the mercies that encompass us every moment. In this, as in many other cases, the predominant thought is a magnet which arranges all other thoughts around itself, imparting to them its influence, and seizing those facts with which it has affinity, to the rejection of those with which it has none; thus, thinking our-

* Emerson.

selves miserable, we continually draw together more and more proofs of unhappiness; whereas, if we would but think ourselves what we truly are, greatly blessed by an Almighty Father, who loves us more than we can conceive, we should find, even in our saddest days, more proofs of His pity and tender care than of His just and severe chastisement. Nothing proves the blindness of our ingratitude more than the differing estimates we make of the same daily blessings: one day of comparative peace often follows another, with a succession of mild pleasures and painless duties; but do we habitually *feel* these times to be blessed? In our thanksgivings we call them so. What is the voice of the heart? Too frequently dissatisfaction. "None of these things satisfy."* They were not intended to satisfy. Yet how is it that if any change comes — if sickness, absence, or misunderstandings with companions, or

* "That unsatisfiedness with transitory fruitions, that men deplore as the unhappiness of their nature, is indeed the privilege of it, as it is the prerogative of men not to care for or be capable of being pleased with toys such as children dote on, and make the sole objects of their desires and joys. And by this you may in some degree imagine the unimaginable suavity that the fixing of one's love on God is able to bless the soul with, since, by so indulgent a father and competent judge as God himself, the decreed uncontentingness of all other goods is thought richly repaired by its being an aptness to prove a rise to our love's settling there."— *Robert Boyle.*

fear of losing them, puts common mercies at a little distance from us — that then they seem delicious; then we recognise them as mercies, and feelingly call what seems *lost,* happiness? When the heart is full of grieving imaginations, or shaken by a sudden storm of passion, the most trifling externals wear a strangely new aspect: two or three little birds hopping about a hayfield on their quiet errands of instinct will then excite a remorseful longing for the peaceful past; will look like alienated friends of a happier period. What various meanings do we at such times impute to the slow procession of clouds, and the flutter of wind-stirred trees! These have then the air of superiors, — their undisturbed course, contrasted with our many jarring movements, making us feel as if man was a pitiable fugitive among creatures more wise and serene than he. Have we not enough of reason to correct our tendency to turn from the present, though its many riches are *now* in our possession, and to stretch either towards an irrecoverable past, or towards a future whose accompaniments we cannot foresee? Satisfied with the happiness of any earthly present we cannot rightly be; but to be thankful for what is *now* given, and wise to perceive its peculiar advantages, is an

attitude of mind which duty requires, and which gives us the best chance of moderate and enduring happiness.

I do not profess to believe that the attainment of this is always in our power; the mysterious dealings of God with man forbid so great an error; and I can too well imagine that, in a few instances, the most sincere and humble inquirer for the advantages of the present will be unable to find any that are not dependent on the working of faith and patience. But patience is the only work which we are sure may be perfect, even here; and if you give yourself to this work, your soul will be too much ennobled for torpor. And I would caution you who may be called to this work, not to expect, from all you read and hear of the vivifying effects of sorrow, that you will certainly feel them during the worst part of your trial. There *is*, during long periods of monotonous affliction, an apparent consuming of spiritual life.

In some lives the tedium of existence may last for years, with rare breaks, and may seem almost insupportable. In utter prostration of soul you may cry out, "It is better to die than to live;" and I warn you there may seem to be no answer to this cry — no interposition of speedy deliverance — all may appear unaltered; yet do not doubt that your

bitter cry was heard, and that if humble supplication has been made to God, it *will* be answered, and the answer will be gracious, and abundantly prove the mercy which suffered the soul to hunger and faint in desert ways. Oh! though it tarry long, wait for it; and, compared to the peace that is to follow, this long time of trouble will seem as but for a moment, and the Lord be known to you as "very pitiful."

Of this we are certain, that "since all that is particular in our state is the effect of God's particular providence over us, and intended for some particular ends, both of His glory, and our own happiness, we are, by the greatest obligations of gratitude, called upon to conform and resign our will to the will of God in these respects, thankfully approving and accepting everything that is particular in our state." *

Therefore, if anything which is not in your power to alter compels you to live what seems a deadening and fruitless life, *faith must contradict seemings;* hopes, and longings, and aspirations, and even the energy that could once actuate them, may die within you, but if they die in accordance with the will of God, they will yet bring forth much fruit.† The

* Law's "Serious Call."

† "But the example of our Saviour, born in meanest estate, and showing the glory of the Father through weeds of poverty, and in

withering influences of your lot under which they fade, are not more cruel than the frost that holds our fields in icy sleep; yet what a flush of beauty and luxuriance follows a hard winter! What a mass of foliage bursts from trees kept in timely check by a keen atmosphere! You may live to find a parallel in your own nature. It sounds like a paradox, but, in fact, nothing is so favourable to the growth of strong natural abilities as repressing circumstances: finding a dearth of nourishment elsewhere, the mind is forced back into its own depths, and only those who have been *obliged* to sound them for their only

scenes of contempt, must take off from all his disciples the edge and bitterness of envy, and teach them that the capacities of the most highly endowed mind have room and verge enough within the most mechanical callings, while the same example exhibits and enforces the true way to dignify the callings and the characters of men, and enables them to sit down with a noble and high contentment, which everything may invade, but nothing shall prevail against. And if Christ, having such poor instruments to work his work withal, so little power and wealth, did yet bear with meekness the imprisonment of his faculties, and look without repining upon the towering height of mean and despicable men, finding within his bosom a resting-place of peace, in the world a constant field of active well-doing, in the bosom of God a constant welcome, and in the prospects, after his heavy office was discharged, an everlasting feast of hope; — may not we mortal erring men be glad to fulfil the will of God in whatever condition He may please to place us, and win to ourselves out of the saddest aspects, and in the humblest allotments of human life, not only endurance and contentment, but the high engagements of a most useful life?" — *Edward Irving's Orations.*

chance of fresh interest, can know how rich and inexhaustible is their own domain; only those, for till human nature is a little starved externally, it will never seek purely spiritual pleasure. And I think every reflective mind may observe, that it seems to be intended that we should get supplies of refreshment from within more than from without: for surely it is remarkable that in times of depression, when one longs for any little incident to happen as a relief, when one looks about for some small taste of pleasure as an invalid desires some nice morsel to rescue the palate from constant distaste, that then no letters come, that no new books are sent, no impulse, no fresh springs from without arise.

In the sullen phase of disappointment, one is apt to think this a causeless thwarting of fate; but behind fate is the will of the Allwise; and I believe, that even by these insignificant mortifications, He will teach us to come to Him for every degree of help; to say to Him with glad conviction, "All my fresh springs *are* in Thee." The precautions of enlightened prudence are from Him also: let all be exercised in warding off the encroachments of melancholy.

If from any cause your days are very dull and dark, try to find out some employment which gives you decided pleasure, or even mere amusement, and

prosecute the employment as much as other duties permit; for, you see, I hold pleasure to be a duty; we greatly need it, and if we have none, we are to a degree disabled for increasing the happiness of others. If you can only do a pleasant thing for a short time each day, yet that little spot of enjoyment will, by the regularity of its return, give to those days a warmth and a brilliancy in retrospect which you can hardly believe possible, while the dull hours that intervene between one time of refreshing and another are present; as we find a fulness of rosy tint in the heart of some rose, whose separated petals look almost colourless, but the tender flush of each, pressed close upon the other, gives to the whole a delicious depth of hue; memory will strangely condense the records of daily life, and in returning to them in after times, you will find a concentrated essence of pleasure or pain, drawn from those multitudes of little things which are now either the subjects of your will, the stepping-stones by which you climb nearer to perfection, or the tyrants to whom your spirit is in bondage, and your servile obedience secured by the chains of indolence and habit.

It is in times of general discouragement that you will feel the advantage of being able to do *anything* thoroughly well: even the lightest accomplishment

may help to restore a wholesome degree of self-satisfaction; and a wide acquaintance with story books may then do good service, by reminding you of the unlooked-for changes which the future may bring; though if you have any pretensions to wisdom, this will rather heighten your value of present blessings, which might so suddenly be taken from you, than stimulate hopes of *improbable* possibilities.

Times will come to every thoughtful person, when every thing, within and without, appears to shake from intrinsic hollowness, when all lives seem to be carried on under strong delusions, and the whole world to be a place —

> " Where nothing is, but all things seem,
> And we the shadow of a dream." — *Shelley.*

Then nothing seems worth an effort, and one says with the Endymion of Keats,

> " I can see
> Nought earthly worth my compassing, so stand
> Upon a misty, jutting head of land —
> Alone, . . . . .
> With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek."

Do not yield to this form of temptation, there is solidity; even in this vain world, most solemn reality

in all that is done, said, or thought, and your own will conformed to God's will, secures permanence in its action, and success in its everlasting results. But while you remember this, remember that God has made man's existence on earth — his spirit's existence — to a great degree conditional on delusion, on what Carlyle calls "the two great fundamental world-enveloping appearances — space and time."

In vain we attempt to pierce through these; could we do so, it would be maddening to the embodied mind. Let us be content with such measures of Truth, such intensities of real life, as the nature of these illusions allow; to attempt to be freed from all, would be to strive to be no longer a finite being.

## CHAP. X.

" Let us make good use of everything we can, but this light fancy is a great ingredient in almost every human composition. When we go to reason, and think in earnest, we can hardly have the confidence to charge any one, that he takes great pains, and runs great hazards, to satisfy his vain-glory, and to obtain the praise of doing something that other people do not, without intending any other end; when yet, if the man would speak his mind freely, this principle is surely at the bottom."— *From a Sermon by W. Fleetwood.* 1700.

" And thou sekest rewarde of folkes, smale wordes, and of vain praisynges. Trulie therein thou lesest the guerdone of virtue, and lesest the greatest valour of conscience, and uphap thy renowne everlastyng." — *Chaucer.*

WHILE examining the internal evils that poison our hearts, and neutralise the means of happiness, I shall not dwell either on sloth or ill-temper, though both are notorious for the varieties of sin and sorrow that they occasion, because the first is a malady so well known, that one may say with regard to its cure, " toutes les bonnes maximes sont dans le monde, on ne manque qu'a les appliquer;"* and ill-temper, with all its miserable consequences, I believe to be often

* Pascal.

only another name for excessive irritability of nerve, and this is subject to so many different excitements, that to combat it as a simple ill-temper, is of little avail; pride, sullenness, peevishness, resentment, every modification of what we bewail as ill-temper, may perhaps be nicely analysed and arranged in distinctive paragraphs; but they are not a blight which we can at once remove, they are all the springings up of a root of bitterness. I hope to reach indirectly some fibres of this root, to propose means by which both its growth may be checked, and the thrilling nerves, which convey to it the stimulus of pain, soothed, and charged with a more wholesome current.

It is perhaps a presumptuous hope; I might better call it an earnest desire.

The wretchedness of irritability in others requires all the forbearance and all the help we can give; in ourselves, exceeding self-command, and a continual recurrence to religious principles.

But I wish now to deal with this "light fancy," which, if the old preacher was right in calling it a great ingredient in almost every human composition, well deserves our attention.

I wish to drag it into clearer light than it is used to, that its mischievous effects may be observed, and

the good tendencies with which it combines, and therefore most frequently simulates, may be directed to their proper channel.

For though vain-glory is a vague and subtle vice, I think it is in some respects more dangerous than any other that can infect a woman's heart; in times of weakness and solitude it grows apace, till, if unchecked, every vacancy of thought and feeling is occupied by its charms; and though punishment surely awaits it in society, it is from society that it draws its most intoxicating supplies. Is it saying too much, if I call it a decomposing element that, pervading the character, will tarnish its brightest parts, and bring the strongest virtues to unperceived decay? And in whatever degree it is allowed, does it not produce a corresponding degree of hollowness? Lest my expressions should lead to misapprehension, I will give a description of its commonest effects in the words of Massillon: — "Ce que nous sommes à nos yeux nous intéresse peu, nous ne paraissons touchés, occupés que de ce que nous sommes aux yeux des autres, et toute notre attention se borne à embellir cette idée chimérique de nous-mêmes qui est dans l'esprit des autres. Il ne nous arrive guère de nous demander à nous mêmes ce que nous sommes réellement mais nous nous demandons sans cesse ce

qu' on croit que nous sommes, ainsi, toute notre vie est imaginaire et fantastique."

But, you may say, if this is true of any but the French hearts whom he thus addressed, the commonness of this desire for the good opinion of others proves it to be one of Nature's salutary instincts. I grant it—but I am sure that it is constantly perverted by most excessive indulgence; all that can be called vain-glory is excessive.

"Every one," it has been said by the excellent Mr. Charles Bridges*, "desires to engrave his own image upon his companions." A truth to which I suppose there are no exceptions, though the desire lurks under so many disguises, and would be so often disclaimed. Does not the veriest misanthrope feel a morbid wish to take *some* effect upon the imagination of his fellow men? Do not believe him who denies it.

If it were indeed our *own* image, just the impress of what we really are, that we tried to leave on the minds of others, there would be no place for vain-glory; but it is too often trying to represent self as what self wishes to be, or to be thought to be,—a futile effort, since nothing is so legible to all, but the unsuspecting deviser of them, as little plots for

* Bridges on Proverbs.

self-honour: those that lie most open to exposure, display of beauties and talents, quoting fine friends and casual evidences of wealth (which generally suggest to the hearer that a few samples of each form the main stock), are perhaps too well marked by derision to be *your* form of self-emblazonry; but I beg you to consider that if you have *any*, they are but a flimsy veil for a very pernicious folly. As you will never pass for other than you are, many days together, why not leave alone the toil of seeming? Leave it, even on the lowest ground of personal convenience, for this vain-glorious spirit is "a blushing shame-faced spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom, it fills one full of obstacles."*

In some temperaments the habitual agitations of vanity will gradually acquire the force of passion; will resemble it in all external signs, in all that is painful and embarrassing in its sensations, without a moment of the sweetness and calm of profound feeling; vainly excited, the sensitive frame will tremble, and the empty heart throb, as if some dear venture of hope was in sight; while, all the time, nothing more precious is at stake than the liking, or respect, or, possibly, the admiration of some person to whom the heart is indifferent. Can anything be so insane, so wholly a waste? And then the reveries

* Shakespeare.

that follow these unrewarded struggles, when we ponder either on the humiliation of defeats, or on the measures of incense offered, or likely to be offered, to self-love: trying to find out what sort of impression we have made, what such a one thought of us; as if we could ever find out, even if the investigation was laudable: why, if we could retrace every word and look, with every accompanying gesture and circumstance, we should still be quite unable to get at the truth; because the mind of each person takes impressions according to its own nature and preconceptions, and as we can never calculate upon these with any precision, how vainly do we "search" our own glory, where motive, opinion, and feeling are usually shrouded from all human cognisance in impenetrable concealment!

"What I must do is all that concerns me, and not what people think," says Emerson, who, with all his errors of faith, has given the world many invaluable reminders of truth. "This rule," he continues, "equally arduous in actual and intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness." Now I do not think that a woman ought to be indifferent to the opinion others have of her; it is so contrary to her nature to be so, that it must be wrong; neither do I pretend that it is

desirable or possible to avoid all considerations of how we stand in the esteem of our neighbour, for they are involuntary, and of great service to society. It is a very wholesome and pleasant thing to feel that we are liked, and I believe it would do us good, when this is the case, frankly and gratefully to recognise the blessing, as well as that of beauty, or any other external advantage for which we are responsible: for it is not a clear sense of what we are or have which nourishes vain-glory, so much as an imagination of what we may be, a fear or a hope of what others *may be* thinking of us.

> "Ofttimes nothing profits more
> Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right
> Well managed."—*Paradise Lost*, book viii.

Conceit founded on fact may be reduced to true proportions by external perceptions, but that which spreads in the secret life of a timid or praise-hungry heart, nothing from *without* can rectify: such a heart is seldom conscious of the extravagance of its self-idolatry, and hours of solitude may pass while it feasts on gratifying anticipations, before it even perceives the absurdity of its occupation. We should be covered with shame if the plagues of the heart were open to human inspection; and yet we know they are naked to the eye of God, and are not con-

founded! Do we think that He who loves us more than any fellow-creatures can love, who knows the issues of sin, and abhors the least, will be, so to speak, less particular than they? less angered by the secret indulgence of envious or jealous thoughts, less grieved by the deadly bitterness of resentful determinations, less moved to scorn by ever-new designs for self-glorification? Assuredly we do not: but the all-seeing Witness is silent, and though we do not go so far as to say, "He taketh no knowledge," the strength of our passions makes us to forget His presence, and when remembered, we say, "Men would hate and scorn and condemn such feelings, but the Almighty can see our temptations and will make allowance; He knows that we are but dust." Oh, let us take care that in this application of truth we do not mock God, and persuade ourselves that He almost connives at our sin. He does indeed see our temptations, and know our frailty; but He sees also that we lightly regard His counsel, and neither watch and pray against the one, nor seek for the support of the other the strength He will largely supply.

Be sure of it, "The Lord hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory:" and when He sees it rising in the depths of any heart, He will not want means for bringing it to shameful confusion.

Can the condemnation that fell on those, of whom it was said, "all their works they do to be seen of men," altogether pass over those who, when their good works are done from purer motives, ardently desire that men may see and praise them?

But there is a form of vanity which reverses every habit of self-praise, that I can only call vain-dishonour, because it perpetually represents to our minds those of other people as occupied with surprise, contempt, or dislike at our conduct, or for our characters: it gathers up every trifle that can be thought expressive of fancied condemnation and scorn, and broods upon the wounds of self-love with as much torment as imagination can add to error.

This is quite different in its effects from "that eager desire to engage attention which is an original disease in some minds;"* but it is quite as unreasonable.

There is a form of insanity which makes people imagine themselves bankrupt, though in reality rich: is it less the result of unsoundness of mind, that the most amiable sometimes believe themselves to be deprived of the love and respect of their fellows? And on what slight grounds! Perhaps from a hasty expression, or a look of surprise, or from silence when

* Paley

notice was expected. How widely mistaken the interpretation of all these may be! If you are given to this sort of delusion, consider what a different meaning there is in the "How foolish!"—"How provoking she is!"—"How stupid she looked!" that comes from your own mouth as applied to another person, and from the lips of another as applied to yourself. When *you* say such things there seems no harm in it, or at the worst only a little unkindness. They are remarks which you feel to be but the simple expression of momentary feelings, rather favourable than otherwise to the person spoken of, since it relieves you of something like a secret grudge against unrecognised disagreeables; but should such things be said of you, or to you about yourself, outraging common good manners in your presence, and honourable feeling in your absence, then they are sayings of fearful weight, imputations, revelations of long-cherished dislike, or cruelties, and unfair. For your "own keen sense of wrong, that thirsts for sin,"* will present them to your imagination highly coloured: that they rise from as shallow a spring as your own slighting comments is the last explanation that will occur to you. But in families where the law

* Coleridge.

of kindness is respected, they are rarely tinged with matter more poisonous than precipitance in censure and impatience of the minute's annoyance; often mere pettishness prompts them, or the too common need of something to say (nothing easier or more generally current than wonder at the conduct of others, because human nature in all, and to all, is a problem insoluble and always of fresh interest). Now think quietly of the waste of feeling, and the creation of discomfort that arises from these mis-translations of self-love; and then look at them in another direction: where praise has been given either to conduct, character, or appearance. Say that it is strong and impulsive praise, given in words that sink in, because they come from a keen observer, and are nicely adjusted to our merits, real or reputed. What is such praise worth when we bestow it on some one else, heartily and with sincere admiration? Is it of half the value at which it is rated when *received?* Does it show a deep and tender reverence for most unusual excellence? Does the mind dwell long on the praise exciting individuals, and watch for fresh proofs of their rare merits? or, does it only arise as a passing emotion, such as a pretty flower, or trait of character in a story-book awakens? Akin it may be to the deepest feelings, but seldom staying

long in the mind because of the many thronging objects which come before it, and cause one feeling to succeed another, one thought to draw on another. Oh, dear Self, you are an old fool! vain-glory fools you from the first day you staggered across the nursery-floor from your nurse's knees to the chair opposite, looking up from the goal for her praise, to the last time you were inwardly gladdened by hearing that you had made a pleasant impression on a stranger; who yet was possibly too much occupied with the effect he or she produced on you, to retrace your social features very carefully. Whatever you have done, or said, or seen, or looked, however admirable, you will find, on taking all things into consideration, that there was not much more cause for glory in it than there was in your first unaided footing on the nursery-floor: so, if you could but love truth a little more, and vain-glory a little less, you would not care to have much more notice taken of recent exploits.

Do not suppose I would underrate the pleasantness and the serviceableness of being conscious of human favour; it gives us an immense advantage, it is sunshine to every faculty, and besides proving a happy temperament, generally helps us to gain from others more lasting affection and regard than liking

alone implies. All I wish to insist upon is that this prepossession in our favour is no solid good unless it is the result of *genuine* virtues; and that where these exist, anxiety about their effect is not only useless, but a direct hindrance to it.

Depend upon it, you are less pleasant to look at, less wise, less clever, less good, from the moment you are so unfortunate as to be assailed by the thought, How nice looking, how sensible, how brilliant, or how religious I must seem to others! That "confidence for worldly ends is of the same efficacy as faith in religion"* has been truly said, but settled and effective confidence is never drawn from the opinion others have of us; it is from the consciousness of our real strength, quite independent of how it is regarded by others, that confidence gathers its power, and from the consciousness of a simple desire to please, for the sake of others, not for our own credit, that it gains all its skill in pleasing.

But yet, you may answer, we cannot help forming a kind of ideal of ourselves in our own minds, and in voluntarily suiting our behaviour to the character of that ideal; making ourselves in some way picturesque to our own minds.

* Capel Loft's "Self Formation."

This is so true that I have sometimes thought we care more for the praise of our fellow-creatures as a proof and justification of the notion we have of ourselves, than as a proof of their good opinion. I suspect that, after all, to stand well in our own esteem is the true source of our hunger for praise, but I only hazard it as a conjecture, leaving it for every one to decide for herself whether it is so. Certainly, a firm and warrantable self-love would withhold us from the humiliating anxiety that so often leads us to inquire what people think of us.

To conclude, we find that whatever bad habits go with them, nature is not to be overcome in these two instincts for idealising self, and desiring the image so formed to be stamped on other minds. What then is the purpose to which we may apply them? As in most other problems of spiritual life, the solution religion gives is as simple as the world's is complex: our true ideal is shown us in the life of the Master to whose likeness we are permitted to aspire; whose Spirit will abide with us, and reveal to our blinded minds what indeed we are, until this likeness is formed in us. What more glorious image of ourselves could we wish to engrave on the imagination of fellow-men than this? What is more exalting than the simple truth, that we are by nature weak and cold as the trembling

drops of water that hang on the dewy leaf, which owe all their brightness to the sun; depending wholly on Him whose divine influence shines through us in greater or less degree, as the soul yields or refuses to yield to His light: each of us ever ready to err, to sin, to suffer, but still so closely united to the Author of all good, and so dearly loved by a Redeemer, that we are mighty through Him, and heartily desirous to love and serve to the uttermost all His servants?

And this I suppose is the glorying to which we are called, when it is said, "He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord." *

Such glorying will not ever find place in a heart panting for the praise of men. But ah! this is still very sweet; how shall we love it with perfect moderation? By striving to be pure in heart, to kill every evil rising *there*, suffering no jealous fears, no proud dreams to defile that well-spring. Of ourselves we could not do this, but with the aid of our strong Advocate we can habitually check every thought and feeling whose detection among men would be disgrace, whose indulgence in God's presence is a provocation of His wrath.

It is for this purpose that I think it so essential to

* 1 Cor. i. 31.

endeavour "to build up your character in the light of distinct consciousness;"* the inner world is dark with many mysteries quite beyond our elucidation, but it behoves us to introduce there as much light as we can, for there it is that we must make straight paths by the side of many a fearful abyss, and through much confusion and darkness. It is thought by some that thus to control the thoughts of the heart is to place a mask upon natural propensities, beneath which they would more securely work our ruin; that it brings us into an artificial state in which we first deceive ourselves and then others; that to give indestructible tendencies a freer play, to trust more to the guidance of impulse, is altogether a more wholesome system than that of vigilant self-government; and there may be in every one's knowledge, cases of lamentable self-deception where such strange energies of passion are displayed under colour of religion, as to lend this objection some weight. I believe I might have come to the same conclusion on which it rests, *i. e.*, that an undisguised nature is safer than one thwarted by internal discipline, had not Holy Writ given a contrary decision. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life:"† and, "the

* Coleridge. † Proverbs iv. 23.

thought of foolishness is sin."* And therefore I no longer consider it an open question theoretically. In practice I find it beset with difficulties, from the treachery of a deceitful heart, and the hidden shafts of a watchful foe: but these argue nothing against the duty of self-discipline; they only make more urgent the need of prayer, that God would direct our work in truth.

Again, I find that the intensifying force of expression is at least as much to be feared as that of repression, both sometimes supplying vehement stimulus; but when God forbids every expression of evil, I cannot doubt which most aggravates it in man's heart. To the term "an artificial state" I object, because it assumes evil to be part of our *truest* nature, and in this, I dare believe, contradicts revelation. Man was made pure and good: *that* was his original nature; evil, though now in all the thoughts and imaginations of his heart, was a breach, a sickness, an opposition of the first nature, and that nature is in every real Christian revived in baptism, and strengthened by growth in grace: it is for eternal life; what will be immortal hereafter cannot be called artificial here. I will add to my own opinion, upon the importance of self-investigation, the advice of *Zschokke*, hoping thereby

* Proverbs xxiv. 9.

to give it more weight. In the chapter on *Selbstkenntniss*, in his *Stunden der Andacht*, he says:—"Think after each action by which you have done good or ill to any one, wherefore have you done this? What led you to this step? Investigate with a firm eye the secret causes, however deep they would hide themselves. Perhaps you did not act with a calm mind, with cool consideration; perhaps many circumstances took you unawares; perhaps the time was too short for deliberation. Yet do not desist from inquiring within yourself whence came the feelings that moved you? Have you done well in allowing them for the moment to obtain mastery over you? Are you not, perhaps through your indiscretion in the sight of others, sunken in the esteem which heretofore they had felt for you, which they owed to you because they had never before seen you so weak? How is it that at this, as at other times also, you are dissatisfied with what you have here and there spoken? What is the true, secret ground of your precipitation? Is it not a hidden vanity, that ever and anon breaks out involuntarily, and becomes manifest? Is it not perhaps your mortified pride, which you would indeed disclaim, but which makes you its subject? . . . . .

"Never, when you earnestly examine your inner

life, will the secret spring of your feelings remain hidden from you; and if you have really discovered them, if you find them so impure that for your own honour you must hide them from men, why do you not destroy them, cost what it may?"*

* "Denke nach jeder Handlung mit welcher du einem Menschen Wohl oder Weh thatest, warum hast du dies gethan? Was verleitete dich zu diesem Schritt? Spüre mit festem Blick den heimlichen Ursachen nach, wenn sie sich auch noch so tief verbergen wollen. Handeltest du vielleicht nicht mit ruhigen Gemüth, mit kühler Ueberlegung; überraschten dich vielleicht mancherlei Umstände: war die Zeit zu überlegen zu kurz; auch dann lass nicht ab, in dir zu forschen: woher die Gefühle die dich bewegten? Hast du wohl daran gethan, sie über dich in dem Augenblick herrschend werden zu lassen? Bist du durch deine Unbesonnenheit nicht vielleicht in den Augen Anderer aus der Achtung hinabgesunken, die sie dir sonst weihten, und die sie dir schuldig waren, weil sie dich noch nie so schwach sahen?

"Woran liegt es, dass du, wie diesmal auch zu andern Zeiten missvergnügt nachher über das bist, was du hier oder da gesprochen? Welches ist auch der wahre, geheime Grund deiner Uebereilungen? ist es nicht eine verborgene Eitelkeit, die immer zuweilen wider deinen Willen hervorbricht und laut wird? Ist es nicht vielleicht dein gekränkter Stolz den du zwar hinwegläugnen möchtest, aber der dich zu seinem Unterthan macht? . . . Nie, wenn du mit Ernst dein Inneres prüfen willst, wird dir die wahre Quelle deiner Gesinnungen verborgen bleiben; und hast du sie wirklich entdeckt, findest du sie so unrein dass du sie jedem Menschen deiner eigenen Ehre willen verschweigen musst, warum vernichtest du sie dann nicht, es koste dir auch was es wolle?"

## CHAP. XI.

"He who is not earnestly sincere lives in but half his being, self-mutilated, self-paralysed." — *Coleridge.*

"Soll Man die Menscheit beweinen oder über die Menschen lachen? Jeder, wie er will: es ist Eines wie das Andere. Ob wir spotten oder ernst sind, kriechen oder hüpfen, zaudern oder fort stürmen, hoffen oder fürchten, glauben oder zweifeln, am Grabe begegnen wir uns Alle. *Doch Eins ist, was nützt: die Klarheit. Eins ist was besteht: das Recht. Eins ist was besänftigt: die Liebe.*" * —*Ludwig Börne.*

THESE were the words of a thinker who witnessing the turbulence of a Parisian world in the excitements of 1830, looked out for some resting points, and with the despair of a keen-eyed observer, and assumed indifference of a humourist, thus described his sense of three undeniably good things, which no fever of opinion, no resolution in government, no sudden change of feeling could deprive of their use.

Without arriving at his conclusion by the same

* Ought one to laugh or weep over human nature? Each one as he will; one is as well as the other. Whether we jest or are serious, creep or frisk, loiter or rush on, hope or fear, believe or doubt, at the grave we all meet. *Yet one thing there is which is of use: Clearness. One that endures: Justice. One that soothes: Love.*

melancholy road, or admiring the sarcastic bitterness with which he expresses it (though for the acrimony of a German of that day resident among the French there is much excuse), I take his concluding assertions as a comprehensive summary of three permanent and unconditional goods, which I wish to insist upon as indispensable to happiness. They would not be so if they were not, without any exception, within the reach of all. I must, however, preface my remarks by saying that, agreeably to my own notions of *Clearness* and *Right*, I rather arbitrarily attribute to Börne's meaning of Klarheit, truth in its various operations; and to Recht, justice in all its branches. "One thing," he says, "there is which is useful, Clearness."

I believe it has never yet been enlisted in the army of virtues which in books we are used to confront with temptations, yet, of course it is included in the idea of several of them: to me it seems a kind of atmosphere essential to the soul's health, and when sin, or error, or neglect in any degree obscures it, in the same degree must character deteriorate and strength diminish. I think it, therefore, our duty to have as much distinctness of perception as can possibly be acquired, to have clearness in every impression we take from without, clearness in every thought and wish and

feeling we harbour within: if this is thought wholly *impossible,* it is from a too common ignorance of our powers. Without this I do not see how "truth in the inward parts," is attainable, for how can you speak sincerely of what you only partially know, or guess at among a confusion of half-perceptions?

Insincerity of expression is inevitable while we remain ignorant of the mind whose contents we are supposed to utter. But we all know that self-knowledge is the most difficult acquirement—yes, but is it less a duty because of its confessed difficulties? "One would think," said Shaftesbury (whose advice in this instance is untainted by his errors), "there was nothing easier for us than to know our own minds and understand what our main scope was, what we plainly drove at, and what we proposed to ourselves as our end, in every occurrence of our lives: but our thoughts have generally such an obscure and implicit language that 'tis the hardest thing in the world to make them speak out distinctly. For this reason the right method is to give 'em voice and utterance:" and again, "He should set afoot the powerfullest faculties of his mind, and assemble the best forces of his wit and judgment, in order to make a formal descent on the territory of the heart, resolving to decline no combat, nor hearken to any terms,

till he had pierced into its inmost provinces and reached the seat of empire. No treaties should amuse him, no advantages lead him aside; all other speculations should be suspended, all other mysteries resigned, till this necessary campaign be made, and these inward conflicts learnt, by which he would be able to gain at least some tolerable insight into himself, and knowledge of his own natural principles."

Any one who has a strong will is at no loss to find out its aim, and the means to be taken to reach it; for strength of purpose, as it excites to perseverance and intense attention, wonderfully clears away all confusion and hindrances within and without; but it is no less true that habitual scrutiny into motive and intention (when not carried to an unwholesome length) greatly invigorates the will; for seeing clearly what each impulse springs from, and to what it probably tends, we know how to deal with it — we can starve it to death if condemned by conscience; and if good, disembarrassing it of all weakening adjuncts, we can actuate it with fixed resolve. When we walk in light we know whither we are going.*

If you would have peace in your soul, accustom

* See Foster's "Essay on Decision of Character" for an admirable exposition of its value.

everything that rises within it to speak with definite clearness; let your thoughts, even those that are painful or wrong, get a fair hearing, that so you may be able to apply to them their proper remedy, or to enforce instant dismissal.

Observe, however, that I speak of those that rise spontaneously, not of those which, by long musings, you may discover or elicit. It may perhaps seem a hair-splitting difference to those to whom the subject is new, but I believe it to be a very important difference, as great as that which distinguishes close observation from anatomy.

We do not get at the truth of our feelings by constantly putting them to the test; by sounding their depths; by curious analysis; for the mind so engaged soon becomes morbid, and its introverted vision confused. It is when feeling or thought stirs within us, that we must seize and bring them to immediate confession: if we hope to apprehend the guilty ones, we must turn round upon them while in the very act of disturbing us. For a broad illustration, take the case of a man whose pockets are picked in a crowd: finding something gone, it is no use for him to stand still and look about for the probable thief, for the crowd of human beings, like the crowd of our emotions, will conceal and mislead continually:

if the man ever discovers the thief, it must be by laying hold of him while the purse or handkerchief is being withdrawn.

Now conscience is much more likely to detect the thieves of internal peace than the cleverest passenger the pickpocket; indeed, if we would give a little more judicial attention to those it convicts, they would not so often return to assault us with renewed subtlety. To some minds, the distinct notice of evil which I recommend may seem equivalent to entertaining wrong feelings; they may think that while considering them, they would gain more hold on the imagination and will. I must again have recourse to a very homely simile: the vagrant who hangs about the back door, unseen by the master, has more chance of entertainment from the servants — has he not? — than he who is instantly sent round to the front door to receive either deserved assistance or prompt dismissal: and so I believe it is with an unjust, unkind, or even an impure thought; however base or defiling, let it come into the daylight of consciousness; that seeing our bosom foe, we may be humbled, and strive to crush it utterly. If we delay to do this, and look on the loathsome thing till it becomes less repulsive — till it ventures to attach itself to defensive arguments — the ill consequences

are the results of this delay, not of clear consciousness.

I speak of our own consciousness only, holding in fearful abhorrence the *habit* of confession advocated by some not yet members of the Romish Church; because it seems to me an unauthorised process, by which the most honest mind can only add to its own obscurity that of another, by appealing from a tribunal where light is possible, and is promised, to one where we are not warranted in seeking it. Such a practice is a slight to conscience and a denial of its power, which has proved fatally successful in deafening the heart to the still small voice that convinces of sin.

Having pledged myself to this opinion, that to insure spiritual health we must—if I may be allowed such an expression—keep open the spiritual pores, not blindly repressing evil, but giving its first movement full exposure; I am bound to mention fairly one exception, or rather modification, of my rule.*

* I do not presume to say that this *is* the only exception; those who know more of human nature than I do may find in these remarks the rash conclusions of ignorance, and may have reason to say, that in the earlier stages of *many* kinds of temptation, distraction is safer than self-examination. In offering my opinion on such a momentous point, I am aware that (though confidently held) it is but an opinion, and I submit it to the correction of my superiors in wisdom and goodness.

The springs of anger cannot at all times be explored with safety: by dwelling on provocations, or reviewing disagreeable passages between oneself and another, with the distinct intention of allaying conscious resentment, we may yet fail, and only increase it.

While the temptation to anger lasts, we must let all that excites it entirely alone; not until it has subsided may we wisely inquire into its origin, for there are central fires in the heart of man which will only blaze the more fiercely if we clear a passage for *them* to the open air of our consciousness: we may labour earnestly to remove all the smouldering fuel of indignation, but the mine is too deep for any strength of resolve to carry it out of the heart; it is often only in our power to pray that the spirit of grace may impede its farther kindling, and then to turn from the causes of irritation with resolute forbearance, postponing all notice of them till the keen promptings of evil are silenced. When angry, did you never feel how inexhaustible a small degree of indignation seems, while you are seeking to find vent for it in expression?

You hope by speaking plainly to say it out, and have done with it; but you are more likely to lash

yourself up to the belief that slight grievances are unpardonable wrongs.

I imagine wrath to be more successfully overcome by suffocation than any other passion, and I am sure you will never be sorry for having stifled it, however much it may cost you at the time. Now clearness will help you to know what *is* wrath: where light does not make manifest, the disguises under which anger and malice are indulged are deplorably numerous.

Let us now consider clearness with regard to our perception of external things. "It is by the agency of indistinct conceptions, as the counterfeits of the ideal and transcendental, that evil and vanity exercise their tyranny on the feelings of man." * This is so true that an honest inquiry into *what* happiness we expect, and *why* we expect it, from forbidden sources, would often entirely remove the misleading affection; but about many things towards which the heart naturally inclines we are unable to procure distinct impressions, so that until we have learned them by experience, this tyranny—which is no other than the reign of hope—cannot altogether be escaped. Yet I think much may be done for remedying its

* Coleridge.

sorrows, by bringing principles in all their might and fulness to bear upon the least emotions and imaginations of the heart. You believe it to be God's will that such and such a joy is denied to you, and you believe His will to be in all ways *best;* you therefore must believe that this seeming good is for you not good, but evil: and yet you allow a sentimental longing for it, a sighing regret that it is still withheld; when conscious of this or any similar inconsistency, believe that you are to a degree denying your faith, and for truth's sake reject the infidelity of the heart *as sin.* If, clearly seeing, you indulge it, do not call it weakness; it is sin, and as such must be repented of and forsaken. Do not mistake me here, and think I recommend a forced application of principle to *every* passing impulse, for nothing more surely falsifies the character than such an unnatural habit. Those who will do nothing but what principle directly dictates, will soon lose the simplicity and joyous freedom which our highest principles prescribe: and what thus begins in want of judgment, is too likely to end in practical though undesigned hypocrisy.

With regard to your outer life, I advise the same distinguishing apprehension of good and evil which I dwelt on as most necessary *within:* when there is

clearness there, candour and firmness with other people follow as a natural consequence. A blessed result: whoever brings into society wise frankness and simple goodwill is a real benefactor: no elaborate prudence, no social talents are so valuable. For I think, with Burke, that "refined policy ever has been the parent of confusion, and ever will be so long as the world endures. Plain good intention, which is as easily discovered at the first view as fraud is surely detected in the last, is of no mean force. Genuine simplicity of heart is a healing and cementing principle." And, with Emerson, I conjure you, for the sake of humanity as well as for your own comfort, to "deal so plainly with man and woman as to constrain the utmost sincerity, and destroy all hope of trifling with you. It is the highest compliment you can pay."

Now, plain dealing so closely depends on plain meaning, that, in speaking of your habits as a social being, I am obliged to return to the inmost springs of action; and I must repeat that unless these are strong and clear you *cannot* act clearly with others: not only must your will be ascertainable, but even your wishes, otherwise those with whom you live have the burden first of divining them, and then of dealing with plans formed under a vague notion of

their drift: not to know what you wish when some decision must be made, is to impose upon your friends a weariness of doubt and endless guessing, with some chance of their trouble being fruitless in the end.

How burdensome is the otherwise amiable person who does not know her own mind! and how constantly held back by the little obstacles her own want of clear determination has placed in all directions! Let me take the room of this imaginary martyr to indecision as an index of her habits. Her table is loaded; many books, many papers, works in various stages of progress; and for the most part neatly arranged: but why so many? Can none be cleared away to make more room? This book, for instance? No; she rather thinks of copying a page in it. That other? Oh, no! she means to read several chapters of it again; and that beside it she has always intended to show to a friend who lives close by. Several lie there because she *meant* some months ago to read them, and in one the marker has travelled to page 120.; a few more were brought up for reference to a forgotten paragraph; not having been consulted yet, they remain, as probably their companions will remain, vexing mementoes of unaccomplished intentions. till a visit, or some other

cause of urgent haste, sweeps them all away, and awakens helpless regret. "Oh, I wanted them *all* for something or other, I forget now what it was; there has been no time for half I meant to do!" Trust me, an hour or half an hour of a few successive days, steadily employed in clearing away, would have been ample for her purposes — and she has wasted many. It is the same with letters; these cannot be put away, still unanswered; nor those burned; she *thinks* there was something in one of them she was to take a note of — she will see some day; and that other contains a receipt which the cook asked for, and she always forgets to copy. There is the same hanging fire in the needlework of her much-beginning hand. A few stitches, a little alteration, a string added, grounding finished, would make a completion of most of them; but, while she intends all this, and is tracing patterns for new work, the school children must wait to have shirt fronts cut out for them, and the old woman's nightgown is still too small in the collar for the gift to be usable. Is this an exaggerated sketch? I wish it may find no corresponding outline in real life, for the mischief does not tell only on study and works of the hand; opinions, wishes, all the growth of personality, become merged in the same confusion; nothing receives the

finish and distinct attention of a prompt and decisive will.

A mind encumbered with half-finished resolves, incomplete plans, and obscure wishes, *cannot* act with singleness of purpose, and by degrees it becomes so painfully embarrassed by its own fruitless accumulations, that all inevitable business is done with precipitance, and a sense of escape from other obligations; and all that *can* be put off is left to another day: — to another day, when decision will be even more difficult from still longer disuse.

"By the street of By-and-by, we arrive at the house of Never."*

I have described an extreme case; lesser degrees of the same irresolution occasion great discomfort. *Almost* and *rather* are the traitors, by whom many a fine mind has been led wavering to apparent uselessness.

Beware of *almost* wishing, and *rather* thinking; of suffering anything that can be perfected to remain in an unprogressive state, too feebly pursued for the will to grasp it, too desirable for complete renunciation.† Decide, — act, — if you rather wish what is

* Spanish Proverb.

† "Distinguish with exactness in thyself and others between *wishes* and *will* in the strictest sense. Who has many wishes has

good and attainable, wish it *quite*, and strive to attain it. If you almost think what appears to you just and true, carry out that thought to its full consequences, and let it be then lodged in your mind as a completed operation of reason. This, however, is a proceeding so irksome to many natures that they will flinch from its requirements as from too severe an exercise; and to avoid it will be fertile in excuses for temporary delay and suspended judgment: they may allow themselves both in many cases, for the limits of human action and human reason do not always permit a short and straight road from will to deed, or from thought to certainty; only let them sift their motives for pausing, and know clearly whether it is those limits or their own want of energy that arrests farther advance. I would fain prescribe for them this rule as a mental tonic: never let an innocent intention, however trifling, die out unfulfilled, if it is in your power to fulfil it; if you once mean to do a thing, fail not, without very strong reasons against it, to clothe that meaning in deeds.

generally but little will. Who has energy of will has few diverging wishes. Whose will is bent with energy on *one*, *must* renounce the wishes for many things. Who cannot do this is not stamped with the majesty of human nature. The energy of choice, the unison of various powers for one, is alone *will*, born under the agonies of self-denial and renounced desires." — *Lavater*, "*Aphorisms on Man.*"

This rule, enforced with unrelaxing perseverance, will soon make us more careful as to the intentions we form, and the affairs in which we implicate ourselves by the rashness of words. We shall be slower to enter into engagements unprepared for their requisitions, when we resolve that each shall be binding and fully carried out. Let us remember that "whosoever wills the doing of a thing, if the doing of it be in his power, he will certainly do it; and whosoever does not do that thing which he has in his power to do, does not really and properly will it."*

Need I say here, that unless the conscience be so disciplined to clearness, that repentance is felt distinctly, the forsaking of sin is very improbable? How much guilt seems attributable to the uneasy sense of past sin, unrecognised and unrepented of; if we have wronged any one by word or deed, and passed over the injustice with no confession of fault and no real contrition, greater offences against truth and charity will too surely follow.

The time is coming to all, without any exception, when a terrible daylight will fill the most secret prison-house of conscience; when all that has been evil, false, and impure, unnoticed and unregretted, with no prayer for pardon, will be laid open in such

* South.

distinctness as the soul of man cannot yet imagine. Shall we wait for that awful day to discover sins of which we have been wilfully unconscious?

It is generally said that Wisdom looks on the bright side of things. She does; but, believe me, she fearlessly investigates the darkest also; for she knows that there also the power and goodness of God are at work.

I entreat you to be brave, to accustom your mind to a steady observation of existing evils, whatever they may be; and I shall borrow a fuller expression of my opinion on this point from a German writer whose depth, and power, is unquestioned.

"Es ist mannhafte Kühnheit, das Uebel fest ins Auge zu fassen, es zu nöthigen stand zu halten, es ruhig, kalt, und frei zu durchdringen, und es aufzulösen in seine Bestandtheile. Auch wird man nur durch diese klare Einsicht des Uebels Meister, und geht in der Bekämpfung desselben einher mit sicherem Schritte, indem man, in jedem Theile das Ganze übersehend immer weiss wo man sich befinde, und durch die einmal erlangte Klarheit seiner Sache gewiss ist, dagegen der Andere, ohne festen Leitfaden und ohne sichere Gewissheit, blind und träumend herumtappt. Warum sollten wir was denn auch scheuen vor dieser Klarheit? Das Uebel wird durch die Unbekanntschaft

damit nicht kleiner, noch durch die Erkenntniss grösser; es wird nur heilbar durch die letztere."*

Look chiefly on the sunny side of things, but "remember the days of darkness"—and yet while remembering the most painful truths, do not habituate yourself to long pondering on the unremovable difficulties of life, on all its uncertainties; the many things which admit of strikingly contradictory translations: for it is an ill habit of mind to be too familiar with doubt of any kind; giving it an instability of opinion, a dizziness of eye not unlike that of the body's, when long gazing upon fluctuating movements it almost loses the feeling of firm ground on which it may remain fixed and calm.

I think it greatly helps in the acquirement of clearness to revert constantly to all the broad undoubted principles of nature and ethics, which neither time nor chance can alter, "for the nature of man doth ex-

* It is manly boldness to fix one's eyes firmly on evil, to compel it to stand out; calmly, coolly, and freely to penetrate it, and to reduce it to its elements. Also one only becomes superior to evil by this clear insight, and one goes forth to battle against it with secure steps; whilst in each part overseeing the whole, one knows always where one is, being, through once attained clearness, sure of one's cause; on the contrary the other, who is without firm guiding lines, and steady certainty, gropes about blind and dreaming. Why then should we be afraid of this clearness? Evil does not become smaller through our ignorance, or greater through recognition; it only becomes curable by the last.—*Fichte.*

tremely covet to have somewhat in his understanding fixed and immovable, and as a rest and support of the mind." *

Throughout the Bible the heart of man is continually challenged by his Maker to decide clearly and for ever, between good and evil, life and death, His service or the slavery of sin. Until this decision is made, and firmly embraced by our free-will, we cannot be at peace with ourselves, or the world in which we find our choice *must* be made: we are "neither hungry for God, nor satisfied with the world; but remain stupid, and unapprehensive, without resolution and determination, never choosing clearly, nor pursuing earnestly; and therefore never enter into possession, but always stand at the gate of weariness, unnecessary caution, and perpetual irresolution." †

* Bacon. † Jeremy Taylor.

## CHAP. XII.

"Alle Rechte, welche wir oder Andere in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft besitzen, sind Bedingungen, unter denen wir Hülfsmittel zu nützlicher Wirksamkeit erwerben, gebrauchen, und bewahren können." — *Zschokke's* "*Stunden der Andacht.*" *

"Most of our errors arise from a narrow partiality to our own interests and humours, for we do not see things in the same light when the case is our own as in another's. If my hogs break into my neighbour's corn, it is an accident, and such things ought not to be minded between friends; but if his hogs break into mine, then the case is altered, for he ought to have yoked them, and it is but reasonable that he should pay for his negligence." — *Tucker's* "*Light of Nature pursued.*"

An inquiry into *Rights* is only one branch of the duty of clearness already insisted upon. "Eins ist, was besteht, das Recht." It is the *one* thing — Börne says, one of the things — I should say, that endures: it is in some senses indestructible. Under the head of *Recht*, I class all forms of justice to ourselves and others; rights which love protects, but which are, as it were, a preliminary to the exercise of love: for until we know what is justly *due* to ourselves and others, how can we give it? Justice to our-

* All rights, which we or others possess in society, are conditions under which we can obtain, use, and preserve the means of useful activity

selves shall come first, because it is in our own hearts that all virtues must first be exercised: if untrue in our dealings with self, we are infallibly untrue towards others; if unjust to self, unjust to others.

Let self then hold firm the rights which it cannot resign without running every risk of curtailing those of its neighbours. Spiritual liberty—that is our dearest and best. I say spiritual, because liberty of action is often impossible to women, liberty of speech imprudent; but liberty *within*—let us guard that most jealously, for it is what we most easily lose by our own carelessness or cowardice, by suffering the influence of companions to enslave us, making their opinion our only standard, the fulfilment of their expectations our highest aspiration; and to avoid this self-betrayal is extremely difficult to woman, whose character, to be amiable, must be yielding in many respects; but oh, let her take care what she yields, for bitterly will she rue it if she allows any one to rob her of her freedom *unwarrantably:* self-respect must not for a moment be imperilled.*

* "Our great and most difficult duty as social beings is, to derive constant aid from society without taking its yoke; to open our minds to the thoughts, reasonings, and persuasions of others, and yet to hold fast the sacred right of private judgment; to receive impulses from our fellow-beings, and yet to act from our own souls; to

If, as I am taking for granted, your abilities are rather above than below the average, I may also reckon on your being hampered by some very notable follies, or weaknesses, if a gentler name is preferred. Perhaps you are "in words too wise, in conduct still a fool." You have probably certain constitutional flaws which, over and above the many stains of sin, make you at times to despair of any high attainments, and most of all, of any peace with yourself.

Constant backsliding and guilt the Bible had prepared you to expect; but this tripping up of all moral dignity by confusions, fears, and petty anxieties, to which it would seem a degradation to give a name, baffles all calculation. You had owned yourself sinful; it seems almost more difficult to believe yourself this unprecedented fool: yet such, no doubt, you are in many points of view, and most weak and imperfect in all.

sympathise with others, and yet to determine our own feelings; to act with others, and yet to follow our own consciences; to unite social deference and self-dominion; to join moral self-subsistence with social dependence; to respect others without losing self-respect; to love our friends, and to reverence our superiors; whilst our supreme homage is given to that moral perfection which no friend and no superior has realised, and which, if faithfully pursued, will often demand separation from all around us. Such is our great work as social beings, and to perform it we must look habitually to Jesus Christ."— *Channing.*

These confoundings of self-respect, these floods of disgrace which appear quite to overwhelm all old fortresses of strength, are exactly what you need to make you "heavenly wise by humbled will." *

Entrusted to you are certain means of great spiritual power; were you only or chiefly conscious of these, you might be in danger of the "insanity of conceit." Thank God for every stroke of humiliation, and welcome it as the bringer of truth: but sometimes we abuse even this healthful blessing, and twist it to untruth; saying with bitter feeling all that the irritation of wounded pride suggests; railing at self as the inconsistent fool, the despicable, cowardly companion, that has dragged one to the dust, and by this common division of identity, giving the angry mind an object of indignation within easy reach. And in so doing we wrong self-respect; and allow such ejaculations as these to pass uncontradicted: "Yes, I know I am fit for nothing, of course; it is no use trying—I always fail." Yet you know that all God's servants are fit for something worthy of immortals (in some moods you suspect yourself of being fit for the work of a high intellect); it *is* therefore of some use to try. If you always fail, you either mistake the nature of your endowments,

* Spenser.

or you do not know the best means of applying them.

If melancholy represents to you your innumerable disabilities with every appearance of truth, still uphold your *right*, and though you cannot then adequately assert it, remember that it remains inviolable as long as it is not voluntarily ceded.

A little patience, and quiet resting till the frame of mind and body recovers tone, and just self-reliance will be restored. Meanwhile remember that the most egregious folly may further your progress towards true wisdom, may help you to show "all meekness unto all men," on the grounds to which St. Paul refers "for we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived." *

Every fall, every fault committed, and duty ill done or neglected, should deepen our humility, and enlarge the scope of forbearing love.

If I am not mistaken, this very keen sense of deficiency is not often found except in an affluent nature; the infirmity that besets strong minds, be it what it may, is generally great and striking in proportion to their power.

I will not enlarge further upon the rights of self, but commend them to the truth-born courage which

* Titus iii. 3.

will enable you to maintain with humility every rightful prerogative: and I will point out, as briefly as I can, some of our neighbours' rights that I think most likely to be endangered by inattention or selfishness.

To secure these there must be justice not only in your actions and words, but in your inmost thoughts. Against one form of silent injustice I would especially caution you—the foolish surprise at any glaring inconsistency in other people, which, if genuine, proves you to be dangerously ignorant of the human heart in general, and your own in particular. You ought to know, and knowing never forget, that in this hidden world good and evil struggle in closest union; that sometimes scarcely a moment divides the sincerest aspirations after holiness from the weakest yielding to its opposing vice; that while generous intentions are glowing in the *consciousness* of man, some secret scheme for self-exaltation is often giving them immediate impulse, and staining the purity of sacrifice.

It is vain to deny this and similar facts, because they are sad, and almost destroy the hope of unmixed goodness; we can only acknowledge them with the contrition of fallen beings, and overcome the subtle temptations to which our enemy will apply them, by

the encouraging promises of Scripture. But seeing that we have all too strong proofs of this fatal liability to sudden declension, seeing that in the noblest souls we can find a vein of baser metal which, successfully touched by evil, might bring their firm structure to the brink of ruin, let us have done with childish or hypocritical amazement when we trace the workings of corruption in the heart, where it is most discordant with long-tried virtue. Satirists have seen it and laughed; they have noticed the proximity of high principle and base practice, and have said, "To what purpose is this profession of goodness?" But the terrible doubts so instilled must not disturb the faith of Christ's servants; while the record of Peter's transgression remains to us, we cannot despair either for ourselves or for another, however deep and sudden the fall which makes hope seem to be impossible.

Hope, and respect, and tender indulgence are rights which every human creature may claim. You will infringe upon these rights most cruelly by a habit of hasty censure. Avoid as much as you can anything like pronouncing judgment: it is as foolish as it is wrong, and expressly forbidden by Him who comes to judgment when the time for *man* to exercise forbearance and mercy will be at an end also. There is

a kind of accusation which, if applied to yourself, under similar circumstances, would waken you to a feeling of its injustice: it is that of saying, in tones of disgust, "So and so is such an unnatural character, there is so much of a falsetto about her." This is, no doubt, very disagreeable and detaching; but before you make it an excuse for disliking thoughts and hard judgments, think what has caused this departure from nature. Perhaps circumstances that excluded from common influences; that forced some tendencies to a morbid growth, and left many wholesome ones stunted and uneasy from repression. Believe me, this is so often the case, that, unless pity is your strongest feeling when annoyed by affectation or formality, you will be grievously unjust.

Women are peculiarly liable to have their true nature falsified till it is almost beyond their own recognition. Those whom one meets in this lamentable state are frequently the victims of error instilled, or restraints imposed, by their earliest teachers from mistaken principles of education. If you were in the society of maimed or distorted people, I conclude that your gentlest skill would be employed in trying to make up for their deprivations by every service that you, in the freedom of health, could render: are the baffled instincts of the heart, the

unsatisfied cravings of a misdirected intellect, the dumb sorrows of a thwarted nature, *less* pitiable than bodily affliction? Alas! they are too often as little susceptible of cure. The power of a Creator can infuse new vigour into a shrunken limb, for it can raise the dead; and vitiated feelings, and deathlike torpor in the soul, *that* irresistible force can alter,—too often only that. A time comes when the mind that has been long accustomed to falseness groans in vain for return to simplicity; it has gone so far out of the way, that every step of return is slow and toilsome. Every unhappy wanderer has a *right* to all the assistance you can give, but without pity and consideration you cannot assist. Yet often we think a nature falsified when, in fact, it is only false to our notions of what every one's nature ought to be: the right of all to have their conduct interpreted according to the genius of their own character, is a right we too often lose sight of. It is most important that we should never forget it; no two bodies are just alike, no characters exactly similar; how foolish, then, to endeavour to interpret the action of different minds by rules that may be only adapted to the peculiarities of our own. As an instance, see how liable we are to misjudge the amount of feeling in other people; it may be natural to our temperament,

and to those with which we are most familiar, to say very little about things that deeply grieve us; yet the neighbour who came in to chat with you so fluently about her recent affliction grieved deeply also: what right have you to deny it? *Your* heaviest sorrows sink to the lowest depths of the heart, and seldom appear on the surface — hers naturally do: she might, I imagine, as well say that you do not mourn, because you mourn silently, as you suppose that she does not, because she is garrulous in woe. Do you think your neighbour, who is relieved on hearing of a friend's death by a full flood of tears, would be justified in thinking you insensible because, when your bereavements are announced, not a muscle of the face alters; because you can restrain every sign of feeling till in solitude the heart's storm may break out, and the sense of desolation overspread it without fear of observation, and without the anguish of being reminded, by the ill-success of human consolers, of the one whose love has no longer a voice on the earth?

To judge rightly of the feelings of others is in many cases very difficult; in none more so than in matters of religion. Things which to some are essential to the performance of pious duties, to others have absolutely an undevotional tendency. Certain forms of prayer

and praise may adequately express the feelings of your soul, but they may be insufficient for the truth of emotion in another: now, if the person who does not use unbidden forms is therefore judged to be indifferent to religion, the greatest mistake may be made. A spirit less truly devout would be more easily satisfied with formulas which, when remote from individual feeling, are more of a check than of an exponent to the life of piety.

It is not uncommon for vigorous minds to show their love of perfect liberty by antagonism; to think, and feel, and say precisely that which it was not expected they would, and seldom to express agreement with the tone of feeling that the occasion seems to call for. This turn for opposition may be carried to an unamiable length, to the weakness of sheer wilfulness; but I must own that its indulgence is very natural in a state of society which shelters so many kinds of deceit. It is the protest of honesty in a world that is too often servile to many-hooded "humbug." And spontaneity is so essential to true feeling, that if one sees one is *expected* to seem affectionate, or grave, or devout, it is to me the most improbable thing that one should at the moment feel either: something like an opposite current of electricity is induced by a manner that seems to say,

"I am sure you must feel this, and I am waiting for proofs of your right feeling." The self-regulating mind would fain make answer, "Then you will have some time longer to wait."

However, we owe it to love, if not to rigorous justice, to explain marked differences of feeling whenever they admit of satisfactory explanation. The perverse spirit that delights in surprising a slow observer, by needlessly exhibiting singularities of thought and feeling, will not be found most intrepid in upholding those differences of opinion which, though dear to the soul as truth, cannot always be explained to those who regard them with suspicious wonder. A few words of gentle acknowledgment that, for such and such reasons, sympathy or assent is not in your power to give, will come most naturally from lips that will not once move in defence of such truths as are insulted by being brought into question.

In replying to any temporary or habitual antagonist, be very careful not to be run away with by the facility of eloquence. The rights of other people are more often sacrificed to powerful modes of expression than to intentional ill-will, and unless you watch against this temptation, when able to answer in a forcible and convincing style, you will infallibly become unjust.

Nothing is easier than by well-arranged sentences and clever putting forward of some truths, to darken your own reason and hide your neighbour's claims; without any positive untruth, it is frequently done. You have but to omit one little modifying circumstance from your statement, to outrun, by a very little, the meaning of another, to answer ever so little beside the purpose, and the evil triumph is yours. Your opponent is wronged, without ostensible injustice; if the wrong is felt and complained of, you may lament it as one of the many misunderstandings for which there is no remedy: you may try to unsay what, on reflection, you feel to be unfair; you may be truly sorry for the haste with which you employed the bright weapons of your mind in making a brisk attack, or vehement justification; but *rights* have been neglected, and you may not always be able to repair the mischief. More humility under provocation, more of the enjoined honouring of all men, would have enabled you to follow more closely the line of feeling you professed to answer, to disentangle error from truth with a more accurate skill; in short, to do full justice to another, however widely opinions differed. If your own cause was to be handled with brilliant but inexact eloquence, you would feel the greatness of the

injustice I here speak of; you would be apt to call it ungenerosity and unfairness, rather than mistake.

A mistake, simply a mistake, occurs, I think, in society too often from an enthusiastic manner of speaking or writing, which tempts us to deny to another the right of being believed: we all know the chilling effect of an inflated style in our book acquaintances, and that the suspicion will arise as to its being a genuine utterance of the writer's mind. And why? Surely enthusiastic, fervid feeling is not so rare as to justify the doubt? I have frequently paused over this question, surprised at the utter disgust my own records of past fervours produce in me. As far as I can decipher the cause, it is that in these expressions of feeling *lively* emotions have been registered, but the train of facts or thoughts which occasioned them has had no adequate notice, and they are thus stranded like the dead weeds cast up by a singularly high tide: in a word, they are out of proportion with average degrees of feeling, and very seldom has disproportion any credit. But it is no case of hypocrisy, or forced excitement.

There are many subjects of human interest which stretch so far beyond human powers, that it is more wonderful to dwell upon them unmoved, than to lose

oneself in amazement and inexpressible thought; and it is (we are told) good to be "zealously affected in a good thing;" only, when we wish to affect others, we must never forget the narrower perspectives of more common moods. The Englishman's darling common sense, must not be shocked, nor his antagonism roused, by the indulgence of emotions not yet explained, or manifested in excitement, which all feel to be the child of weakness.

Take care, therefore, lest you in your turn tempt another to refuse you due credence; unless a sound judgment warrants your warmth of expression, your words will be worse than useless; and if vanity prompts their vehemence, they may be admired, and they may fan a doubtful flame into sparkling light, but they cannot live, they cannot strengthen a good cause; belief in them is rightfully refused.

Lest you should have to deprive your neighbours of a right which only custom leads them to believe their own, I counsel you not to apologise habitually where apology is not due. It may be the natural habit of a gentle and courteous person to justify and explain her conduct when no one else is in a position to call her to account, and thus to invite interference which is not consistent with individual liberties: but though it appears an amiable weakness to a careless observer,

it is a weakness that soon brings its own punishment, and difficulties very unfavourable to amiability.

Well may our inspired teachers so often urge us to meditate on Wisdom, for in every concern, in the least as well as in the greatest, for our happiness as well as for our soul's health, it is the "principal thing." We justly fear sin: let us tremble also at our least habitual folly, for every folly has a proportionate penalty, and so urgent is the necessity for its correction, and the means when once put in practice so potent, that I am inclined to apply to any *permitted* weakness these admonitions against sin: "Bind not one sin upon another, for in one thou shalt not be unpunished."* "Wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same shall he be punished."†

* Eccles. vii. 8. † Wisdom, xi. 16.

## CHAP. XIII.

"Let friendship creep gently to a height; if it rush to it, it may soon run itself out of breath."—*Fuller.*

"Eins ist was besänftigt, die Liebe."—*Börne.*

One thing soothes (or pacifies), *Love.* But what sort of love is here spoken of? The love one feels? or the love of which one is the object?

I think this will be answered differently by people whose experience has not enabled them to know much of the effects of both together.

Those who are of a cold temperament, or who from infancy have been loved too well and too generally to know unsatisfied cravings for love, may say, "Oh, surely, the love one feels is what quiets and occupies the heart: what one can so seldom fully enjoy; it is so difficult to love as entirely as one *could* love; so easy to be loved. Just be rather agreeable and good-natured, and people will love you, or pretend to love you, till you are weary of the cheap pleasure. Oh, without doubt, in this giving is far more blessed than receiving!" Speak low, fortunate

creature! blessed indeed outwardly in no common degree, though scantily endowed with feeling; speak low when you say these or like words, for perhaps there are hearts shivering near you that long have pined for but a part of your abundance; who, either from dulness or timidity, or some other impediment to a pleasing manifestation of their natures, have hungered through life for a return of love; loving warmly, with intense, anxious love, and the inevitable jealousy that makes its success more unlikely, its repulse more frequent, than fearless love can imagine.

People who have hearts such as these would tell you, if their painful reserve was ever broken through, that "God had made them evil-favoured in this world, and without grace in the sight of men, speechlesse, and rude, dull, and slow-witted;"* that it is easy to have the whole soul filled with love, but that this did not soothe them, that it made them restless, and the prey of fear and doubt. To be loved again, to be dearest to another, is, according to their feelings, the one thing that soothes and consoles under any affliction.

This contrast of experience involves tragedies of daily life, which I am quite unable to enter upon

* Tindal's Letter to Frith. *See* Cotton's "Mirror of Martyrs."

with adequate powers of consolation: whatever truth lies in the saying that, "le secret d'être aimé est de ne pas aimer," is *so* sad, that I would rather leave it to the individual patience and prudence of each on whom its doom falls, than prove my own incapability by attempting to clear up its mysteries. Happily there are very few whose lot it is only to be loved, or only to love; few who do not warmly reciprocate the love that is bestowed on them: most women experience both these blessings, but many want greater wisdom for enjoying the privileges and discharging the duties of both. I will therefore notice whatever appears to me most commonly overlooked in these respects; and because so boundless a subject requires limits, my first remarks shall be upon love that is, or ought to be felt as the highest blessedness of which we are capable, in relation to our fellow-creatures, and then upon the love which we attract, either undeservedly or by the natural links of cause and effect. (And you must understand that I refer to love in its general sense, not to the passion which is felt exclusively for one; that love which is beyond all other love in its magic and in the momentousness of its results.)

It is but repeating a world-old truism to say that we often love a few too much, and very many too

little. It is hard when love has gone deep into the heart to put any bounds to its sway: to observers it may seem excessive, to ourselves quite unequal to the merits, the rare excellences of the beloved; but sorrow awaits all who love without moderation and a wakeful remembrance of the exceeding frailty of human nature, even at its best; sorrow, and what is far more abhorrent to those who love, change,—it may be, alienation. Every idol is at last thrown down, it matters not how strong the foundations are on which it is placed, nor how firm the affiance of those who raise it, nor how lovely and good it is itself;—to the idolising heart its doom is solemnly pronounced by the word of truth, and either by change, or death, or intervening accidents, the object of idolatry is separated from the foolish one who, in any degree, clings to the creature more than to the Creator.

But while you remember what human nature is, and what the true object of your deepest love, you will be in no danger of loving a fellow-creature too well; and you may love devotedly, and still wisely, with a heart surely fixed in its right resting-place.

I think much of the unhappiness from affection that we hear complained of, is unjustly attributed to love: it is frequently from self-love, which has trans-

ferred its exactions to the heart of another, and finding them either ignored or opposed, raises a plaintive cry about unrequited love. Believe me, true love is too happy to benefit those it loves to make these frequent allusions to requital; it would be rejoiced by the least sign of increasing love, but it never dreams of buying it by obligations; thanks, acknowledgments, caresses, it may often miss in quiet dejection, but it is far too humble for complaint. When every little slight gives rise to the gloom of wounded self-love, we may be sure that our love is not of a kind that can well bear examination; it is a clumsy imitation — a great affection for self, veined (it may be) with good principles, and very prettily varnished with sentiment.

I often wonder at the mistakes people fall into about gratitude — at the surprise expressed where it fails after great benefits have been conferred; for in many cases the benefits were so little desired, that they are felt to be a heavy burden, a fetter on the heart, forming the unwarrantable hold of an uncongenial nature on one whose principles make a show of love and gratitude impossible, when they are not really felt.

It is true that we may and ought to feel obliged for the actual good done; but in not a few instances

visible benefits are received at the expense of far more precious *feelings*, sensitive delicacy being bruised, and independence of action shackled, by material boons which the poor recipient would feel richer without. Is it possible *then* to feel the joy of gratitude? When will people practically remember that, with regard to the affections, *being* is of far more consequence than *doing?* To do that which deserves love in return, and to be what we cannot love, is to impose upon an honourable mind the most painful conditions.

There is an extreme of unselfish love, of which a high order of beings are capable, that may produce ill effects, though it has a somewhat sublime appearance; a love which is so disinterested, so far from seeking its own, that it seems to give up all hope of finding anything to value or admire in those it seeks to benefit. It is more compassionate than tender, and seems so much more fitted to give support than to receive it, that it may be a little galling to our pride, and prove superiority too undeniably for our taste; in short, it has only to be exhibited in large dimensions to be recognised as patronising. Now spiritual patronage is not much more agreeable than that which takes a broader — a carriage-road to inflict obligation.

I own myself very impatient of being loved on principle; yet, if that is the only way in which we can be loved, I for one would not reject my neighbour's fulfilment of the royal law. Let the most superior sample of humanity love me because it is a duty to love, but let me humbly suggest that there should be no *sign* of condescension; and that a more common sort of affection, the give and take of mutual kindness, is not always so entirely out of the question as these pitying friends suppose. While they do so, it should not surprise them if the inferior sometimes grows a little restive under treatment that is unflattering to self-love, and sometimes wishes to decline the advantages that might result from it.

Beware of what attachments you incur — guard your love as you would guard your liberty; it is a treasure which you may squander hastily from the "besoin d'aimer" natural to inexperience, but which you will often be fain to buy back with grief and perplexity inexpressible. From the first time that you indulge in terms of lavish affection, feeling them all too weak to express your joy in the acquisition of a new friend, to the last, when using them towards this same friend seems a mockery of the want felt within, you may love and be loved; but how little will you be soothed by that love if it has not taken

root in your heart! A poor pretender to the position it cannot maintain, it languishes more and more as time gives more repeated proofs of its hollow insufficiency; it snatched the insignia of sovereignty, and used its outward seal, while the usurpation was not opposed by feeling; and now that it is, — now that it would fain sink into due nothingness, — it dares not lay aside its state and high pretensions, lest the treason become evident to others also. The secret of many an intimacy quickly fanned into a blaze of romantic love is this, the heart has yearned for a bosom friend, and hopes to find one by tenderly attaching itself to a kind companion, and pouring upon her its wealth of love: when all is given, and constitutional peculiarities begin to show the absolute impossibility of her perfect recipiency, or equal attachment, a chilling doubt creeps over the sanguine heart, and, though repelled, it will grow to conviction, and conviction to a miserable sense of alienation, and alienation to all the bitterness of self-reproach. How then? Was love wrong? Is this deep-seated dislike, that will make itself heard in the midst of caresses and kind words, is *this* right,— this more real than love? So I believe: that hasty surrender to what you called love was wrong, and what you felt was untrue, inasmuch as you felt for an image of your own for-

mation, not a reality: also, this dislike may bring you to a more just conclusion than that mistaken love ever could; it may lead you to see that you must love for some better reason than that you think yourself understood and appreciated; this you may be by those for whom it will be impossible for you to feel a lastingly strong affection.

Be, then, on your guard against hasty conclusions about characters little known to you; do not think, because you know that admirable qualities are to be met with in friends, that when you have found friends, you have necessarily found these also; for they may be still a great way off: this life may pass before you meet friends who would deserve your fullest admiration—your deepest love; they *are*, no doubt, in the world; so are many other blessings, which yet may never be allotted to you here. Do not, from weariness of waiting, try to deceive yourself as to the calibre of excellence which is within reach of your friendship, for the best foundation of love is truth, and any *make believe* of the heart too generally ends in souring it, even to injustice. We believe in the deliciousness of a southern climate; but if we never leave England we shall never be able to feel it. Would it not be foolish to try and persuade ourselves, some fine summer's day, that our northern

atmosphere was as soft, and that we might do as Italians do? No less foolish is the romantic desperation that attributes to mediocrity the fire of genius; to a cold and hard nature the sweetness of a genial temperament; to a person stiffened by dull precision, by a merciless restraint of impulses more in want of stimulus than repression, mental profundity, and superhuman command of feeling. Yet it is often done, and much to the injury of the unwilling representative whose real virtues would be better valued, if natural disabilities were recognised. Zschokke advises us always to look at the world "a little through the glasses of fancy and sentiment. In order," he says, "not to lose faith in humanity, one does well to think every one as good, or even better, than he will seem." "Ein wenig durch die Brille der Fantasie und des Gefühls anzuschaun. Um den Glauben an die Menschheit nicht zu verlieren thut man wohl, jeden für so gut zu halten, oder für besser als er scheinen will."* This is all very well when our penetration has come to a just estimate of the true natural capability of each, for men as well as things "cannot get out of their nature, or be, or not be, in despite of their constitutions,"† and it is

* Zschokke's "Selbstschau."

† Sir Thomas Browne.

as foolish to expect some qualities in certain natures, as to look for figs on thistles.

But if we were not too much taken up by the expectation of singularly great excellence, we might find in the least striking characters much worthy of love, and admiration too; even the unprepossessing, whose insipid manners are at first repulsive, have, with very rare exceptions, a flavour and piquancy peculiar to themselves, which would quite reward the degree of affection we ought to feel for them. If we cannot discover *anything* that favourably distinguishes one fellow-creature from the rest of his kind, we have probably not seen that one in his truest and best condition. Would that we had more largeness of heart!—that we could love human nature in all with an unexclusive love, expecting less from each individual and more from all! What more worthy of the tender pity and respect due to fallen majesty than human nature in every person of every class?

Exclusiveness is a fence generally set round a small and barren ground: natures rich and wide in their scope are liberal, and their love is as comprehensive as their intelligence: and exclusiveness is indulged on mistaken principles if it is thought necessary in order to avoid the false position, the unhappiness of which I have described; for only by *premature*

belief, that in a comparative stranger you have found an eligible *confidente*, will you be exposed to its complicated evils: it is true that those who *have* spiritual affinity with you will quickly be admitted to your confidence, and command your affections, but with spiritual kindred (according to my notions) you are not liable to future disenchantment. Till you have had more experience in life, it is very desirable that you should be guided in these matters by the advice of those who have seen more variety of character, or, at any rate, that you should give your own penetration some length of time to work in, before you commit yourself to bonds from which you cannot withdraw.

It is against lavishing confidence and bosom friendship, where affinity is not possible, that I have argued; in a broader sense of love, no one can love too freely, or too well. Few know how happy this life may be, because few love as many and as much as they ought; and we *may* hope all things of our neighbours within the bounds of reason: if this limit is overpassed, we shall have to prepare ourselves to endure all things in an undesirable degree. From the net in which your own want of discernment, or want of caution, may have entangled you, there is (as far as I see) no complete escape; there is no possibility, either in a social or Christian point of view, of saying

to the one whom you once treated as most dear,—"Pray have the goodness to desist from your endearments, your unvaried kindnesses, they have become intolerable to me since I have better understood your true character; and though at the expense of your feelings, I must speak to you as truth dictates."

It would be a relief, no doubt, so to speak on some occasions, so to cut the knot of a chafing tie, but it is not justifiable. What right have we to trifle with the feelings of others, who may truly love us?

I think (of course with the exception of matrimonial engagements) that in these cases, the nicest sense of truth may be satisfied in going on on old terms, by a hearty exercise of all possible kindness, and daily prayer for the enduring tender love which every follower of Christ should feel for every other.

If the sweetness of old confidence is missed and bewailed by the unattractive friend, then it is surely allowable to confess the change that has altered us; and a truly charitable person will do this in terms which, inflicting no unnecessary wound, will leave unaltered the claims of past affection. "The pang, all pangs above, of kindness counterfeiting absent love,"* will not be felt by all as the poet felt it, but it is a severe pang to the least susceptible; and the only way I know by which it can be softened, is by

* Coleridge.

taking care that the purest love—love for Christ's sake—shall be ever present and active. This may not content the one who has lost the admiring fondness of her fancied counterpart, but it will convince her that she has not found "a worse than foe" in "an alienated friend."

The temptations to neglect the secret duties of Christian love press hardest upon sensitive natures; and these duties are most frequently unnoticed by the courteous and gentle among them, who can always command exterior kindliness. But let them look to their inmost feelings; to the slight aversion which begins to make communications with a tiresome companion as short as may be, and turns even the eyes from the unwelcome face as often as an answering look can be dispensed with: we call it slight aversion when it affects us, because we should be loath to be forced to resist it, as downright ill-will and malice are resisted; let it be brought into the full light of truth, and we shall be aware of its great danger. Consider the courtesy which veils dislike; what is it often but a covert for undisturbed sinning? No one can find fault, no tongue can upbraid with hope of convicting us of unkindness, yet the heart feels it, and a wound is made, more or less deep.

"Oh! no," replies one vexed by an irksome

associate, "if it was felt, she would not be so intensely provoking; but no weary look—no silence —no civil intimation of being *bored,* makes the least difference." Probably not; any difference that these methods of seeking relief could make would be for the worse — would make pointless chatter more vivacious, questions more frequent, complaining remarks more peevish; for it is pretty certain that discomfort of mind will heighten every disagreeable of manner; the state we call nervous bringing into full play every weak and disordered element of character; and if by coldness and distance we succeed in producing this state, we strengthen every temptation to dislike.

Now I think we shall not say too much of the powers of a superior nature, if we assert it as a rule, with very few exceptions, that when two people are together, it is the fault of the strongest if the weaker one is habitually uncomfortable; there must be surely a mixture of pride in the manners of the other, a slight tint of impatience or contempt, or the less richly endowed (unless so poor as to be capable of envy) would generally feel raised by intercourse that ought to leave both gainers, the one, *at least,* in patience, the other in light.

Are you ignorant of the cruel unkindness of

which you may be guilty without saying a word? of the injustice you may practise when pride leads you to refuse any confession of being "put out," though your companion by every expression of word or deed anxiously inquires, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" Fear lest the indulgence of sullen or gloomy feelings bring you at last to that wretched state in which fault is so confounded with morbid affections of the body, that neither you, nor those who love you best, can exactly determine where involuntary depression ends and fault of temper begins, for when at this stage of unsoundness, you are deprived of all human help. Believe me, you may gradually be led to it by allowing your manner to show uncomfortable moods; you may have a dim notion that, though feeling too unhappy to please, you can still excite curiosity and concern: to be anxiously wondered at may seem for awhile rather an interesting position. But folly never interests us long; people are anxious, of course, to know how long it is likely to last, as they are anxious about the duration of an east wind, or the smoky torrent of an incurable chimney, but the fact of sullenness seldom meets with more respectful attention than any other domestic nuisance. "What's the matter?" "Oh! she is only in one of her sulky fits again," is all the notice it is likely to attract.

Think it no common-place of sermons, nothing less than the truth, that every little wrong, consciously committed, darkens the light within you, and makes it more difficult to see what is right; if you yield to ill-humour on one occasion you will be less able to see its wrongness in the next. I know too well how hard it is to overcome a fit of ill-humour, how *reasonable* it seems; for the time everything appears to you dark with a kind of ideal hatefulness; nothing is said or done without stirring up new feelings of irritation and disgust. It happens to your mental eye that all objects take a disagreeable shape, as to the eye of the fevered body wandering over the walls of its sick-room, which, having once traced out some fantastic pattern in the papering, finds this repeated on every side with importunate distinctness; for it is your own susceptibility to vexation, not the provoking ways of other people, that in nine cases out of ten produces your annoyance: and if it seems to be caused by their unkindness, pettishness, or downright ill-nature, know (from the evidence of a fellow-sufferer) that there are many ways by which patience might be overcome, without the dignity of having something to forgive.

A stupid joke, slowly insisted upon; a dull look fixed on you interrogatively; ah! a hundred little

nothings by which no one has a thought of giving pain, will provoke as much and more from the shame of minding such trifles. I know no help for this pitiable state, short of what is all prevailing — take refuge in prayer, and then do your best not to oppose its object while in the company of others. It would be as just for a distorting mirror to complain of the ugly faces put upon it, as for us to complain at such times of distaste, of the disagreeableness of all the people and things we meet with: the receiving lens is itself in fault.

There is something in pride so invincible when confederate with the will, that if once it is roused to resistance, or to the defence of anger, I almost despair of anything counteracting its influence. The Most High alone is able to soften and subdue intense pride: may you be preserved by His mercy from ever giving place to a feeling so hateful to Him. When you feel it begin to swell in your heart, exercise the utmost energy to conquer it, lest by omitting to do so *then* you should draw on that fearful crisis when you feel as if you neither could nor would give way, when though it is but a trifle on which resistance hinges, yet you think you would rather die than give up an iota of your will. To avoid its coming to this, I advise you daily to

practise concession to the wishes, and deference to the opinion of others, even if you do not think them better than your own; you can thus exercise external humility, till by degrees it may penetrate to your feelings: above all, learn something of the rare art of allowing yourself to be in the wrong, not only when you can do so with graceful frankness, but when conviction is forced upon you in a way that hurts self-love.

It would carry me too far for the patience of my most long-suffering reader, if I attempted to specify all the snares most fatal to good humour: they are on every side of us; a high tide of happy conceit in other people infinitely disgusts a fastidious observer, yet what is it but the coming to a turn in the road from which they see their good deeds or good parts in sunshine? Would you quarrel with such sudden exhilaration if your own success, or that of a friend, occasioned it? Again, to see other persons nursing and fondling their own particular foibles, stirs your contempt; were you yourself less foolish, you would see more of the strength of their temptation, and rather less of their weakness in yielding to it; for "He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour."* Now,

* Prov. xi. 12.

it is true you can do no one who is in fault any good without taking a higher ground than theirs; not the height of serene surprise that their follies should so much differ from yours, but the vantage-ground of the "meekness of wisdom," which will give you an elastic good humour in all your dealings with error. And you must be prepared to allow to others a great difference of pace in the action of their minds, otherwise you will be in perpetual discord with those who think either much faster or much slower than yourself.

Perhaps your powers of mind have by nature a rapidity of movement that carries you instantaneously to the climax of a subject, making it extremely tedious to go slowly and in detail through all its approaches—the only way by which some minds can reach it: yet this tediousness must be borne with when combined action is required; because you who see the whole by an intuitive glance, are sometimes able to see the *parts* of the whole also, while the mind that slowly ruminates, and, bit by bit, resays and reconsiders the least portion of its convictions, is truly *incapable* of a comprehensive view. And why wish to urge on such minds? to precipitate their tardy operations? They have advantages as certain and peculiar as those of your speedy flight: give them

time to weigh the feathers and count the sands that obstruct their feebler feet: they need it, as much as free space for rapid movement is needed by you.

It is too common for people of energetic natures to fret at the slowness and dulness of others as a *voluntary* infliction—a tyranny by which stupidity disturbs and worries the intellects that it cannot obscure; a little more wisdom would show them that in most cases it is a temperamental necessity, a drag allowed by Providence to retard too much velocity in human affairs, a ballast that *has* its advantages. "Le souffle malveillant de la médiocrité" is arid and disagreeable enough, but who has ever spoken with sufficient gratitude of the unexacting, unintimidating gentleness which softens our intercourse with many people of less than average abilities?

If you are one of those rare beings with whom a principle has more weight than the practice of the most unimportant among your fellow-creatures, you will avoid the vicious weakness of consenting to ridicule and detraction: while duty to God withholds you from volunteering any unkind censure, a sense of what you owe to yourself will restrain you from a foolish compliance with companions who habitually amuse themselves by laughing at the faults they detect in their neighbours. If you hope

to preserve the power of loving worthily, never fall into this ignoble habit. Could your eyes be opened to the truth, you would see that it is no clever device of ecclesiastical teachers, founded on figurative expressions in the Bible, which accustoms us to be called members one of another. It is a fact of which your own experience might convince you, if human observation was ever dispassionate enough to perceive all that passes before it. So much do we all belong one to another, so closely is the human family, in all its branches, united both to the nearest and most distant of its members, that we cannot hurt another in the least degree without wounding ourselves: for a while no suffering may warn us of self-injury, but it is surely awaiting us, and without a thought of resentment on the part of the one we wronged, our breach of kindness is inevitably revenged. If you believe nothing else that I assert, *believe this.*

The susceptibility of self-love would be extended to the feelings of all around us if we could form any adequate notion of the degree to which we all mutually depend on each other for happiness and well-being; and it is the assurance of this which should stimulate us to strive for the greatest possible perfection in the least things. *Every* weakness and *every* fault tells with fearful certainty on the fate of

others; *none* can exist harmlessly: we often think we can keep our folly to ourselves, we say "we can take the consequences." Alas! they are never all in our power. One sins, but many inevitably suffer; one is silly, but many rue his lack of wisdom: no man liveth — no, not for an hour — wholly to himself.

In a life short as this, so often darkened by irremediable calamities, it is surely a grievous waste to diminish the happiness that might be enjoyed without fear, by the gratuitous misery of ill humour. Yet how few refrain from disturbing domestic peace by some form of it! Let us guard the serenity of the moment more carefully than we do; smiles and pleasant tones are a cheap payment for the great increase of happiness that they bring into society; and assuredly their opposites, dry cold looks, harsh or lamenting voices, destroy more pleasure than human beings can afford to lose without cause. I think we seldom sufficiently remember the *unseen* trials of all about us; from those of the little child, fear-stricken by a face graver than usual, to the vague apprehensions and keen regrets of the old, there are so many shades of grief which never can be exhibited, and which yet may tax patience to the uttermost. We know it by daily experience, and still continue to aggravate every burden by our petulant expressions

of passing vexation: we know it, but when we are worried it is the common doom of our unfortunate housemates to be made thoroughly uncomfortable also. Ah! if we could but see what true sunshine the unselfish cheerfulness of love could throw upon every rough place in our path, and every cloud of life's uncertain day, we should think it worth while to try, even when most disturbed ourselves,

> "On a cloudy heart
> To set a shining face, and make it clear,
> Seeming content to put ourselves apart
> To bear a part of others' weaknesses."—*Daniel.*

Probably most of you who read this are familiar with Moore's lines upon the decline of love; in case they should be new to any one, I introduce them again here:—

> "Alas! how light a cause may move
> Dissension between hearts that love.
> Hearts that the world in vain has tried,
> And sorrow but more closely tied;
> That stood the storm when waves were rough
> Yet in a sunny hour fall off,
> Like ships that have gone down at sea
> When heaven was all tranquillity.
> A something light as air, a look—
> A word unkind or roughly taken—
> Oh! love that tempests never shook,
> A breath, a touch like this has shaken."

## CHAP. XIV.

"In all but the singularly unfortunate, the integral parts that compose the sum total of the unhappiness of a man's life, are easily counted, and distinctly remembered. The happiness of life, on the contrary, is made up of minute fractions — the little, soon-forgotten charities of a kiss, a smile, a kind look, a heartfelt compliment in the disguise of playful raillery, and the countless other infinitesimals of pleasurable thought and genial feeling." — COLERIDGE.

I DO not think the suffering caused by antipathy has ever been fairly dealt with; it is seldom recognised by teachers who profess to inculcate Christian charity, and whatever blows they do aim at it seem dealt under cover of rebuke to hatred, envy, malice, and other notorious malefactors. Either they have no knowledge of a very subtle foe, or they know too much of it to venture upon an open encounter.

I have no presumptuous expectation of conquering the difficulties of this subject, but for the sake of honesty I will not pass them by unnoticed.

According to my own experience, I must confess that antipathy is sometimes a real affliction, and cannot be entirely overcome by religious principles.

I find it as indestructible as any other natural instinct; a feeling that can be held in check, but never *altogether* extinguished, and I offer the only opinions I have been able to form on this point, with great hesitation. They have helped me, but I have no sufficient reason for thinking that they will help another whose disposition may be capable of an easier solution of difficulties that have beset mine with many snares. With this preface I may give my advice without further conditions of acceptance.

Until you can feel vinegar to be sweet, and smoke pleasant to the eyes, do not hope to *lose your sense* of uncongeniality and natural dislike with antipathetic people, for it will make itself felt, and if you have not attended to it in calm moments, in times of irritation it may break out with sudden vehemence and cause irreparable mischief: but granting the antipathies of nature, you must nevertheless strive to establish firmly that unity of spirit which is the main condition of Christian life. If it be possible, I would advise you in cases of decided antipathy to avoid all unnecessary combinations with the nature that is a stumbling-block to your own. Do not voluntarily throw yourself into companionship with such, in the hopes of outgrowing or overlaying the painful impression of past times, for probably the same ingre-

dients of discord are ready both in your own nature, and in that other, to burst out with intensified violence, on discovering that new circumstances leave old disagreeables unchanged — and unchanged too, perhaps, the love of that heart which ever seeks yours, but never draws near to it. Yet if you are, by your appointed fate, thrown together, *then labour for true union*, and resist unceasingly the temptation to keep yourself separate in feeling and distant from all but unavoidable association. Your efforts for real harmony must be cordial, and you must flinch from no degree of sociability that is desired on the other side: for remark, there is the widest difference between kind companionship and *attempted friendship*.

This is, I know, a very difficult position to occupy, for in it sincerity is as hard to secure as hearty kindness, and I have many times overheard the complaint of a heart, not otherwise unkindly, that despaired of fulfilling its duties: but we cannot allow these complaints to overpower the commands of God.

We are told by Him to love our brethren as He has loved us; to be merciful as He is merciful; by one whom He inspired, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." Dare we flatter ourselves that our love is fervent and true, while we cautiously deal out to others (be they ever so un-

lovely to us) the fewest expressions of affection that are compatible with professed agreement?

It may indeed be literally doing as we would be done by in this instance, for to be sure of reciprocal dislike gives to some stern natures the comfort of satisfied justice: what so burdensome as the love of which we feel so unworthy that its least sign irritates us to stronger aversion?

Yet what but the fullest measures of human tenderness can make our mercy in the faintest degree a likeness of God's mercy?

Infinitely distant as we are from the Divine Nature, will we go farther from it when invited to draw near, and in refusing to a fellow-creature the patient love our Creator demands for him, refuse the inconceivable measure of mercy which the merciful shall obtain?

Far then be it from you to persist in any coolness or reserve which, while it gratifies your shrinking fastidiousness, puts a hidden barrier between you and your neighbours.

You may by so doing protect your pride and delicacy from offence, and hide your want of love with exact politeness, but is it well by a deadly wrapping to cover inward death? You may answer, angrily, "Are we to allow ourselves no shelter from the intrusiveness of vulgar minds?"

Trust to nature for having supplied you with ample protection, and to your own common sense for keeping natural strongholds in serviceable condition: only extreme folly will leave you "dismantled and exposed to scorn and injury, by too much dulceness, goodness, and facility of nature."*

When your own indiscretion has brought you into closer connection with uncongenial characters than is either necessary or desirable, you must in meekness accept the consequences as a means of proving the strength of Christian love. I do not say that even this can always conquer the effects of a radical aversion, or so completely reconcile alien natures, as to put a stop to every jarring sensation, for I believe that in some instances of this sort "it must be that offences come;" and that living peaceably as much as lieth in us, cannot always ensure a very lasting peace.

But on our own part we can, and must, secure perfect forgiveness of all injuries, and sincere good will under all provocations. *Nothing less,* and, if it be possible, much more, must be our constant aim; more sympathy, more readiness to admire and appreciate even where the heart is not strongly attached. And there is more to love and admire in every human

* Bacon.

being than unscrupulous haters can ever see: whenever we find nothing but disagreeable traits in any one, we may be sure that we are blinded, and walking in partial darkness. In the chapter on Self-Control, in "Letters to my Unknown Friends," you will find the most practical advice upon the subject that I have ever met with: remedial measures are there proposed, which will be found available for the use of every one.

Let us now dismiss these painful considerations on what is, I trust, to many a theoretic difficulty. You who are dearly loved, and love with equal tenderness, on your part let nothing be wanting to make those who love you happy in their love: and for this you must not fail to be strictly true, full of indulgence, and unwearied in patience. If you are not quite sincere in dealing with those who love you, you can never have the full satisfaction of being loved: you cannot be sure that it is not your tribute of soothing fondness, rather than your real self, that is loved. Flattery may not be intended, but fondness, when not combined with single-hearted truth, is nothing better in its disastrous results.

Of self-command you have constant need, even with those most dear, for "some forgiveness needs the best of friends." Have mercy on their depres-

sing moods, and ever abstain from pettish upbraidings; for it may be that what provokes you is but a passing gloom, when

> " the heart is sick,
> And all the wheels of Being slow."

We know if we have suffered strong pain in the body that it seems for a time to draw us far away from external impressions; we hear the voice we cannot heed, and see what we can scarcely observe. So it is with the heart in grief; while it lasts it is separated from happier ones, and deaf to all but its own sad cries. You would be gentle if the body was worn with pain; oh! be far gentler now, for "the whole soul grieves;" and do not fall back upon your willingness to make any great sacrifice for those who love you as an excuse for any flaw in present lovingkindness: you may be willing to give up a great deal, and do a great deal that is not required of you; sweetness of manner and forbearance is what is wanted just now, and is worth more for home purposes than heroic deeds. We sometimes see people of warm feeling and little patience surprised to find that friends less fervent and more forbearing are more tenderly loved, more depended upon and sought after than they, — but it is not

more surprising than that we should prefer to rest on soft turf, rather than on a gold mine covered with nettles. If you love enough to be generous, for pity's sake love enough to be good-humoured and without a taunt on common occasions of annoyance. Remember, that it is often enough to make a sad or irritable person positively ill-tempered for the day to hear such remarks as: "How cross you are to-day!" "You really are very unreasonable!" The strong influence of the opinion other people form of us affecting not only our own self-estimate, but our actual line of conduct, is at no time so evident as in hours of irritable discomfort.* Few perhaps sufficiently consider this, and some may even deny it a due place among established facts. I am myself so fully convinced of it, that I think it is seriously to be weighed how much effect it has upon a sensitive idealising spirit to esteem itself ugly in *any* re-

* "It is a truth in human nature that children and the great mass of mankind have but little knowledge of their own characters and dispositions, and quickly form that idea about themselves which is suggested by the conduct of others towards them. They see themselves, as in a mirror, in the treatment they receive; they become accustomed to a view of themselves borrowed from without, and on that view they act; they see it is taken for granted they will do wrong, and think they therefore must do wrong; they lose self-respect, and with that a large portion of the desire to do right." —*Monro.*

spect; how the belief that it is so seems to harden feeling, and render manners awkward or abrupt.

Do you see smiles on the face of a timid companion? She looks happy; but in how many instances the seeming happiness is only caused by a renewed conviction that she is pleasing to others; reason enough for her to be pleased with herself: and that stern distancing air about one less prepossessing will gather new disagreeables from any confirmation of her own suspicion that she is unpleasing. Here then is a field for some of love's secret service. Try — though it may cost you many efforts — try to find out the unpleasant person's best side; bring all the sunshine you can to bear upon it (avoiding of course all strong contrasts of her gloom and your gladness); and, with the vague sensation that some one takes pleasure in her society, she will begin to make it more pleasant: very often you will be surprised at the unexpected charms that will steal out when the frost of chagrin begins to relax.

But we will suppose a more difficult case, where your own good-humour has failed under the constant fret of a morose manner, and *then* one sharp word or unkind transaction of the unhappy kill-joy turns every remaining shade of pity into quick anger;—

and it is to be remarked that in some people, by nature exceedingly mild and forgiving, there is yet a core of pride, which, once stung, is more implacable than the resentment of many dispositions more easily angered. Supposing you to be liable to occasional fits of vindictive feeling, you may sometimes say in your heart, "I could bear, and have borne, a great deal, but this is *too* much; this is intolerably provoking."

Arrest that impatient thought, that hasty deserter from the habitual discipline of conscience: this that you call intolerable is the touchstone of your religion; if you will not bear *this*, how will you *prove* yourself Christ's disciple?

Neither may you be satisfied by refraining from all but a scornful, unconciliating silence; every degree of scorn separates, not alone from your fellow-sinner, but from Him who has compassion on the ignorant and foolish.

The instant temptation after any dissension, declared or felt, is a wish to separate, to stand aloof from the offender.

> "As those whose hope
> And dearest wish is ne'er to meet again,
> Lest that their love, being in substance lost,
> Should lose in their contention e'en its show,
> Sinking from chill to cold." — ERNEST.

Resist this temptation, if you would not incur any

danger of "abiding in death:" let fault on the side of your neighbour or your own draw you nearer instead of distancing, seeing that it proves so much weakness and need of help.

There is no dignity in sullen silence, in careful restraint of easy conversation, and the substitution of cold politeness; there *is*, in a tender, humble approach to the disturber of your peace with all the soothing spells of sincerity and love. If the wound to pride was made more painful by a sense of your inferiority to another, by the thought that she was too strong or too clever even to perceive your difficulties, yet do not intentionally withdraw from her confidence and affection. That superior nature, as you call it, has lonely hours, blanks in its vivid existence, that give deeper pain perhaps than what you suffer, because its capacities for joy are deeper too: go closer to it; speak frankly; relieve the burden under which she secretly groans, if you can: *try to do so;* if you cannot all at once *wish* to succeed, try for Jesus' sake to speak and act lovingly; and even if your "cup of cold water" is dashed aside by her impatience, forgive; and forget failure when again success appears possible.

On the other hand, if *you* are apparently the superior, and — writhing under the aggravation of

uncongenial companionship — have been provoked by the unconscious injuries of a feebler mind, on you love has still larger claims. Go not to your lofty thoughts, your dreams of holiness; say not by your practice, "Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give" help, or pity, or affectionate cares; but resolutely advance nearer to the weaker sister or friend, and, with hearty, simple kindness, win her back to mutual good understanding. Who can describe the miracles love has wrought, the power of doing good that abides in a loving, and honest, and humble heart! It is as incalculable as the happiness which such a heart may attain to, though compassed with infirmity. Trusting, and loving, and forgiving all, under the cautionary checks of sound judgment, is the surest mode of finding that very many in all walks of life are *worthy* of the fullest trust, and love, and forgiveness. In a certain sense, a frank, affectionate nature finds home-like happiness gather round it wherever its lot may be cast; for it finds that fellow-creatures are very generally like brothers and sisters in deed as well as in the phraseology of sermons; whereas those who think and feel themselves aliens, quickly alienate all around them.

Do you think of love as that which only prevails to this extent in the warm imagination of sanguine

moralists, owing much of its apparent force to notes of admiration and large words? If you think so, you greatly mistake. Love is stronger and more patient than words can say; and it is boundless in resources, for it is unwearied in prayer for the beloved to Him who is omnipotent, and who loves the same objects, only better beyond all thought.

I have failed to express my true convictions if I seem to you to have *attempted* fully to notice the several duties of love; for only of God, who is Love, *can* we learn how to love aright. Ask Him to teach you more and more of that which will only be perfected in eternity, which begins in present time, but so faintly that its agency is oftentimes hardly noticeable. It is as a grain of mustard seed here; what it shall be we know not; we only know that if we are to be as He, the Redeemer, is, our love will be far stronger than death, and our joy in it like to the blessedness of the Most High.

## CHAP. XV.

"Let him who gropes painfully in darkness and uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to me was of invaluable service: Do the duty which lies nearest thee, which thou knowest to be a duty; thy second duty will already have become clearer."—*Carlyle.*

As is customary with people who declare themselves ready to give their fullest consideration to the doubts of another, I have carefully examined a few of those to which I suppose my readers subject, and then answered them with many words of digressive advice. My remedies have been more detailed than my description of the troubles that require cure, and this not only because of the common proneness of all advisers to extravagant donations of that which is seldom valued by the receiver, but from my belief that a mind-malady, which undermines peace by incessant questionings, is most effectually relieved by a distinct affirmation of whatever is undeniable. I have laboured to make you feel "the certainty of

the words of truth," wherever I could honestly speak of it as *certainty*, knowing that every human soul "loves to dwell in truth, it is *her* resting-place;"* and that, after a rest *there*, the mind is better able to grapple with those obstinate perplexities that remain unrelieved — to grapple with them, or to do what is in some cases wiser, to suspend attention to them until a future time, when you may have a better vantage ground, bodily or mental, on which to fight your doubts and "gather strength."† In so doing you do not evade them with cowardly fear, but being sure that the light by which you walk is equal to your present needs, and can clear up at the time of appointed relief every cloud that now obscures it, you resolutely set aside as mistaken all disquieting thoughts which would interrupt the effects of *certain* truth, by faint whispers of that which is uncertain, it may be, untrue. I said that I have given you my honest convictions on the subjects of the fore-

* Jeremy Taylor.

† "He fought his doubts, and gather'd strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of his mind
And laid them: thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own;
And power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone." —*In Memoriam.*

going chapters; but though, *for the sake of convenience*, I have often used the imperative mood, I would not for a moment wish to impose on unconvinced minds, as essential to well-being, any notions of my own that may be peculiar. I think them essential: I think that an industrious, intelligent woman, with a mind well trained and a body well ordered, punctual and methodical in all her concerns, with her religion based on such sure foundations that *feelings* cannot loosen its hold on the mind, and so truly practical that its vitality affects every action, — a woman who is brave in suffering, patient and trustful in dejection, clear, and just, and true in thought, word, and deed, fervent in charity, meek, and quiet in spirit, self-denying and prudent for love's sake also, — *cannot* possibly be otherwise than a happy creature. I think the few things that can disquiet such a person are as nothing compared to those that will give her calm and lasting joy, and I think that every step made in advance towards this state of being, brings increase of happiness, and gives a zest and hope to life which will do much to dissipate the gloomy clouds of its morning.

As I have a dread of the intuitive dictates of wisdom being neglected for the attractive completeness of any human scheme, I would much rather you

found increase of happiness and undisturbed progress in the narrow way by the light Heaven sheds upon your *own* mind, than by any assistance which human teachers can offer. How well was it said by Shaftesbury, "The most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system, and the surest method to prevent good sense is to set up something in the room of it. The liker anything is to wisdom, if it be not plainly the thing itself, the more directly it becomes its opposite."

Pray take anything I have said, *unsupported*, for what it is worth, and for nothing more: in all human counsels we must make allowance for the deficiency and excess, the constitutional disproportion of every human mind.

I have presupposed that yours is gifted with a noble ambition; that you desire for yourself such high degrees of perfection as can be attained in the body.

The world and the word of God speak in very different tones of the aspirations suitable to humanity. The word of God says, "Be perfect," "Be merciful, even as your Father in Heaven is merciful;" what could the creature desire more of gracious encouragement? Could we have imagined or claimed, without Divine permission, so high an honour as this invitation implies? Much too high for the wisdom of the world to accept, this constantly warns us against

overstrained ideas of perfection, and all that comes under the elastic term of enthusiasm.

Though quite aware of the truth in which this instinct in favour of mediocrity is entrenched, of the fact that in all things, spiritual as well as physical, reaction is equal to action, and that there is great peril in so much remembering we are Christians as to forget we are men*; yet I am sure that the less aspiring counsels of the world are more puzzling, more at a distance from the nature of man, because not given by the Creator, than those it rejects or only receives with a decent and formal submission: they are more complex and conditional, and must therefore be of greater difficulty in practice. The highest precepts are invariably the most simple, because they apply to the earliest movements of evil; they purify the source of action: man only prescribes for the evil that meets human cognisance. Take, as an instance, the law of kindness,—God's law; how perfect, simple, and comprehensive! But how will worldly wisdom advise, when a tendency to dislike is complained of? "It is imprudent to indulge it, it makes enemies;" or "unreasonable, we all have faults, and all need toleration;" or "it is

* Bacon.

foolish to vex yourself about the faults of another;" at best, "it is not like a good-hearted person to cherish ill-will." Which of those sayings, though true, gets any hold upon the aversion of the heart? For a time they may help to cover the root of bitterness; but it remains in full strength, and will spring up and destroy much good, unless the grace of God is sought, and his creature is honoured and loved because He commands it. In these, and all temptations to sin, we *may*, in spite of frailty, be more than conquerors, through Him who loved us. We may so learn His mind as to be even more tender, kind, and solicitous about those who displease, because they suffer from that plague which, but for Him, had been the destruction of us all.

Again, human beings have their conventional ideas of superiority, which ill agree with those we gather from the Bible. We often say: "We can never bear this;" "such a prosy, dull creature is quite intolerable;" "this is an insufferable bore," with a self-satisfied tone, as if want of patience gave us a momentary claim on the respect of our neighbours; yet patience seems to be a marked characteristic of all true greatness. No doubt there is excuse for the slights often put upon it, as a contemptible, depressed kind of virtue; but when it is mean-spirited patience,

there is no restraint of power, and hence no resemblance to the Divine attribute: we may always be sure that our patience is noble and highly born, when we refrain from murmurs, eloquent lamentations, and angry retorts, for which we have both inclination and ability; and if we pride ourselves on anything while under the burden of deserved trials, it is surely better to take a pride in patiently abiding always, than in fretting and declaring ourselves too weak to bear it. Some readers may be ready to object to this, and wish to remind me of the danger I have previously adverted to, of living and acting too much on abstract principles, and of the mistakes holy men have made when they met the complicated evils and perplexities of life with the lofty generalities of religion.* But why should the highest principles be carried out to the neglect of those that are equally requisite, though of subordinate importance? which, as you will remember, are pressed upon our attention in many parts of Scripture, and cannot therefore be inconsistent with the highest strain of purity. "For the Christian religion, carrying us to

* "Human nature will not well bear to be lifted to a stage much above that of ordinary motives, or to be cut off from all correspondence with such motives. The dangerous experiment has been tried a thousand times, and has always failed."—*Isaac Taylor's History of Fanaticism.*

heaven, does it by the way of a man; and by the body it serves the soul, as by the soul it serves God; and therefore it endeavours to secure the body and its interest, that it may continue the opportunities of a crown, and prolong the stage in which we are to run for the mighty prize of our salvation."* We must be wise in our better generation; as the children of this world, we must unite the subtle wisdom of the serpent to the innocency of doves; we must think on whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, and give all diligence to our work on earth, lest we bring discredit on our profession, and discomfiture to every hope of advancing the good of souls after the manner of men, as well as by intercessory prayer.

I have sometimes noticed with regret, the difference of hope which may be observed in Unitarians and those who are in the fullest sense of the term Christians, with regard to the perfectibility of the human character.

Those whose creed does not admit the belief of man's inherent sinfulness, who appear neither to recognise the fall of man, nor his need of a Mediator with God, seem to demand more of the individual,

* Jeremy Taylor's Sermon on Christian Prudence.

and to expect greater perfectness of virtue, than those who believe their fallen nature redeemed, and strengthened by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. I state the contrast as it appears to me, being ignorant of the precise tenets of the Unitarians, and only judging of their effects from the literature pervaded by them; and I draw attention to it only as an instance of the different degrees of Christian hope among us, and of the falseness of that humility which disclaims all expectation of pure motive and sublime earnestness—calling the members of Christ's mystical body worms and altogether vanity. Such does not seem to have been the mind of the inspired writers of the New Testament. St. Paul speaks to Timothy of a "pure conscience," of the "man of God" being "perfect," and St. John of the heart not condemning, as if these things were possible; so that, though we must daily confess that of ourselves we can do no good thing, yet surely, as very members of Christ, it would be nearer the truth, and more befitting our profession, for each one to say with humble boldness, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

It is too commonly the habit of religious minds to think of this world as only a passage of escape from perdition to heaven's felicity, and of this life, and

those who continue to love this life, as altogether too bad for anything more than Christian endurance and almost martyr-like opposition: now, though without Christian endurance, and the inflexible constancy of those who died for confessing Him to whose glory we must live, we cannot indeed make this escape, yet to these virtues others less stern should be added. I do not wish the austerely religious to think less of the necessity of these, but more of the expediency of other good qualities equally dependent on grace, equally suitable to the Christian—such as a grateful perception of the positive joys and spiritual advantages of this lower state; a loving regard for every fellow traveller, a warm concern for the earthly happiness of those who will occupy our place on earth, when the time of probation is for us ended; in short, a tender interest in humanity, a disposition to make the best both of this life and those who pass through it with us: for I am persuaded that this would be a far better preparation for heaven than the ascetic turn of mind which prompts men to hurry towards their spiritual goal with disdainful neglect of the imperfect joys and imperfect goodness that may be found even in a "vale of tears."

If any extreme can be good, this alienation from the world is, of course, better than having the heart

choked with its cares and the lusts of many things: but very bad is the best extreme when it makes us gloomy on religious grounds, wholly discontented with the pleasant portion in which, even on this side of the grave, man's lot often falls, and too much taken up with hope of angelic intercourse, to pay due attention to poor humanity, still struggling under the load of the flesh. Those who are addicted to this error accept the hopes of the second dispensation with a faith too exclusive; they seem to make it a point of conscience, on the strength of far greater hopes, to reject all others, and to appear to careless observers, in spite of these hopes, "of all men most miserable."

Do they not forget St. Paul's words, "But godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"?* Do they not need to be reminded, in the words of a most profound writer in our own day, that one of the purposes of Christ's mission was to bring about a "*Secular Reform;* that is to say, a purification, a rectification, and an ennobling of man's life, individually and socially, as related to this present course of things—even that life individual

* 1 Timothy, iv. 8.

of which death is the termination, and that life social which matures itself in races, expires with them, and renews itself in other and remote regions?"*

But the danger of forgetting this is not nearly so great as that to which I would now direct your attention,—the danger of familiarity with the *idea* of what you ought to be, blinding you to a true knowledge of what in daily practice you are.

Among all the fatal delusions to which sinful beings are exposed, none is more easy and common than this. A pure and lofty theory can, for a long time, so occupy the mind that it scarcely notices grievous inconsistency in its practice; and in some cases the most unhesitating selfishness will actuate those whose warm benevolence and practical charity is beyond doubt on occasions where personal interest is not thwarted by their consequences. And there is such a thing as aiming too high in this way; that if your motives are of an order too refined and subtle for common duties and simple obedience, you may habitually neglect both, and yet only feel a slight check from conscience. Now and then, perhaps, a passing thought of, "Should I not call this wrong in any one else?" or, "How strange that I can be guilty

* Isaac Taylor's Restoration of Belief, p. 262.

of such a fault!" may trouble you, but will soon be silenced by the holy aspirations to which this temporary chill incites you. Take heed, then. To aim at one right, true, or self-denying act, lying before you in the plain line of duty, is worth all the spiritual intensities of thought with which you are apt to console yourself; and the failure you are so likely to make in its performance may bring you a rare blessing — true humiliation. If this is long unfelt, there is great fear that you will become an unusually successful self-deceiver, one whose selfishness is idealised, and entirely cloaked in theoretic virtues. And if it comes to this, not only your own soul is damaged, but, as ever, evil causes evil, and strengthens itself with terrific force.

Your conduct, from its ludicrous disproportion to your principles, has brought these — which in moments of enthusiasm you think you would die to defend — these very principles — into contempt among the foolish, and painful suspicion among the wise: for all the consequent evil you are to a degree answerable.

To avert this disastrous possibility, I propose an unpalatable medicine: since, theoretically, we all agree that the heart is deceitful above all things, I propose that we no longer trust to it alone for criti-

cism on our conduct, but *willingly* listen to any who comment upon it either with censure or suggestive wonder.

I know that it is the last thing the greatest admirers of humility are likely to endure,—that it is particularly unpleasant to be told that any one else remarks the least portion of the sinfulness and imperfections our prayers acknowledge and our hearts deplore; and I know that even if we can tolerate rebuke and admonition, acting upon it is even more difficult,—that it is easier to impress every wise maxim upon another with affectionate eloquence, than to apply one precept to our own case during temptation; and yet I see that this must be done, and that the voice of human reproof must often be hearkened to here, by those who hope for the transcendent joy of praise from their Judge hereafter. And as, owing to the excessive impatience of self-love, we seldom give friends the opportunity of exhortation, I think, with Jeremy Taylor, that "it is none of God's least mercies that he permits enmities among men, that animosities and peevishness may reprove more sharply and correct with more severity and simplicity than the gentle hand of friends, who are apter to bind our wounds up than to discover them and make them smart; but they are to us an ex-

cellent probation how friends may best do the office of friends, if they would take the plainness of enemies in accusing, and still mingle it with the tenderness and good affection of friends." *

I so entirely agree with this, that I entertain a great respect for the common home discipline of being laughed at: with all its drawbacks, its efficacy in breaking us in, and awakening us to the salutary conviction that we are liable to absurdity as well as faultiness, is in the long run quite an indispensable advantage; wherever we find it has been foregone, is there not constant reason to regret the omission? To my mind, intercourse with those who have been well laughed at early in life (it may be perilous to begin the process later), compared with intercourse with those who have rarely tasted the pungent dose, is as much more easy and agreeable as is travelling in a vehicle upon springs compared with jolting heavily in one that is without them.

How many foibles may cling to the behaviour of the most sincere Christian! how many trifling habits grow upon one, which an occasional word of rough or gentle warning might effectually check!

And let it not be said that flaws of which a pure

* Life of Christ.

conscience does not inform us are immaterial, for no one can tell how much they may impair the *effect* of real virtues. With an eye to social charity, I believe we should spare no pains to conquer even the least inelegance in speech or movement; for not only slovenly habits and rude manners, but an irksome tone of voice, a stupid gesture often recurring, or an unmeaning phrase constantly repeated, have often lessened the influence of excellent people, who would not for worlds inflict any pain consciously. This kind of annoyance does so much the more mischief, that it vaguely disquiets, and from the obscurity of its source is seldom recognised as a temptation from without; the fastidious observer attributes it to a miserable state of spirits, and this often causes more irritation than any provocation which we know to be external. No doubt personal feeling may be a predisposing cause; but in the best temper and best spirits, a frequent shock to good taste is really painful. Our own common observation of what is to be regretted in the manners of other people should embolden us to endure the wounds caused by plain speaking, when we are so fortunate as to find any who will tell us what is disagreeable in ourselves, without increasing a morbid desire for talk about self. There is

much to withhold us, both in prudence and charity, from habitually lavishing these "precious balms" upon another, but in receiving them there is little or no danger to a firm mind.

It is now time for me to answer an objection to all my advice, which, I imagine, may often have occurred to you while reading these pages; it cannot be expressed more forcibly than in these words of Mde. de Staël: "Ce qui est involontaire est si beau qu'il est affreux d'être condamné à se commander toutes ses actions, et à vivre avec soi-même comme sa victime." You may say that I advocate too toilsome a regulation of impulse, too constant application of self-conscious discipline. I answer that toil is the beginning of all true joy, and that unless there is self-discipline early in your career, there is inevitable sorrow and self-reproach laid up for its close. But I also have a fear of so rigidly adhering to moral regimen, that all the wholesome impulses of nature are overruled by system, and *therefore* I urge you at once to accustom yourself to the simple commands of reason, and never to allow the least suspicion that they can be at variance with those of religion: none are so free, so open to every happy, and useful, and holy impulse, as those who have calmly reflected on their difficulties, gradually

overcome their doubts, and embraced with vital energy those opinions which their reason finds consonant with revealed religion. We have known too many in these days who, avoiding reflection and self-government in early life, have in later years adopted voluntary fetters, resigned innocent liberties, and transferred to the blind guidance of a fellow-creature the spirit that has access to the Father of Lights. And in these days every thought and every opinion is submitted to a sifting inquiry, which makes it impossible for you, or any one, to leave theirs to a chance formation: you must now choose your spiritual position, and stand firm in it; while you delay, hoping for an easy indifference or safe neutrality, there is no peace for you, no end to the doubts that will be suggested—even to the unthinking, whose careless minds would find none in their own cogitations.

Our enlightened age is ready to pull to pieces every system of religion or philosophy in its feverish grasp: unless your faith is strongly based on revelation, and reconciled with reason, how will it ever bear the strain of future years?

Bear with my entreaties once more. I do entreat you to remember always what is implied in the words often carelessly uttered—"It is better to do

so and so ; " " it would have been better." When we say this, we generally believe what we say ; but do we really apprehend all the good gained and the evil avoided, by doing what reason pronounces to be better ?

Do we remember that every degree of better or worse, in the conduct of each one of us, has results that will be felt throughout eternity ?

What we say, or do, or feel a few hours before death, is not perhaps of half so much importance in determining our immortal condition, as what we say, do, and feel during the many days of youth carelessly given up to the direction of chance by an unstable mind.

Each day in its familiar round of events has no solemn aspect; but the ineffaceable records of each common day — in the book of remembrance and in the secret tablets of our hearts — will prove to us, when all our days on earth are at an end, that every hour was infinitely precious.

These hours are now your own, and the hope of an ever-growing excellence—a hope that nothing can take from you without a voluntary surrender of the Christian's birthright. Do you still sigh, and say that I expect too much of human nature ?

Look again and again to the Word of God : there

alone can I find a warrant for my expectations, and, finding it there, I know that in such a hope I shall not be ashamed.

The Maker of man, and the Witness of all his struggles against temptation, must know what degrees of perfection His creatures are capable of attaining. However improbable they may seem to me, His commands satisfy every doubt.

If you had anything *less* than an Almighty helper, the terrible power of your enemy, the dismaying evils that infest the world, the sin and weakness ever present in your soul, might utterly confound you; but "when the whole powers of thy soul are as it were scattered and routed, rally them by believing. Draw thou but into the standard of Jesus Christ, and the day shall be thine, for victory follows that standard, and cannot be severed from it; yea, though thou find the smart of divers strokes, yet think that often a wounded soldier hath won the day. Believe, and it shall be so with thee." *

* Leighton.

THE END.

79

1

F 48773
548 B.
146

London:
Printed by Spottiswoode & Co.,
New-street-Square.